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SOCIAL MEDIA AND SELF-IMAGE AMONG YOUTHS IN OSUN STATE

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Abstract

The concept of self-image cuts across every human irrespective of their age and level of maturity and it cannot be discussed without mentioning the media particularly, the internet. Research showed that it can affect how they perceive themselves especially when they compare who they are to who they think they are supposed to be. This study investigated social media and Self-Image Among Osun State Youths. This study was anchored on the Cultivation Effect Theory and Selective Process Theory. The study adopted descriptive survey method, using a structured questionnaire to generate data from a sample size of 400 respondents drawn from across Osun State through non-probability sampling technique. The findings of this study showed that social media can affect how youth perceive themselves. And that majority (43.7%) of youths as revealed, make fashion choices based on trends. Also, it was discovered that respondents, (38%) monitor likes and comments on their posts. This shows that individuals are interested in what people think about them. In addition, the study also discovered that individuals have a perception about the person they want to become, as seen in the social media because it is trending and they (21.2%) want to be influential. The study recommends that, media literacy should be reinforced in order to bring [redacted] consumers of media content to reality. Social media users should be exposed to what is true and what is false. Orientations should be done about the vast advantages of social media. Many are not so exposed to this in Nigeria. There should be age restrictions and proper monitoring of teenagers in order to protect them from social media vices.

Keywords: social media, self-image, youths, online trends, perception, social media likes and comments.

Introduction

The concept of self-image cuts across every human irrespective of their age and level of maturity. According to research conducted by the National Institute of Health and Care Research, United Kingdom (2021), self-image is a complex phenomenon involving the media and individual psychology. Self-image is what a person perceives himself or herself to be and cannot be discussed without mentioning the media, especially the Internet.

The Internet is a reference point for information about everything. This includes information about the latest things such as gadgets, fashion, slangs, entertainment, etc. When anything new drops or happens, the internet is the first stop because everyone wants to reach their target audience within a short period. The Internet is so swift and truthfully, every human wants to catch up on recent happenings in order to be up-to-date. In the process, whether consciously, unconsciously or subconsciously, much time is spent on these platforms. A platform where so much time is spent for the sake of feeding information needs is capable of influencing multiple areas of life unknowingly or otherwise.

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A statistic conducted by datareportal.com in (2023), revealed that at the beginning of 2023, there were 122.5 million users of internet in Nigeria. The Internet is a major source of information for everyone, including young adults and teenagers in this century. They in fact, spend most of their time scrolling through digital devices for one purpose or the other. Surplus information is available on the various platforms of the Internet. It has also had a great influence on the choices of young people. These choices range from career to fashion and so many other choices pertaining to life. The social media is a component of the Internet which is also the New Media of Mass Communication.

In addition, Cote (2022) describes New media as any media that is delivered digitally. It includes the use of digital technologies such as personal computers, mobile phones, internet and its components which includes the social media.

Social media is a hub of so many activities. Everything that has ever been disseminated through mainstream media now has its digital version, thanks to social media. Advertising, marketing, news, sports, politics and so on, can be viewed via various social media platforms. In Nigeria, youths' range between the ages of 15 and 24 are the most active users of these platforms.

Social media platforms portray products services and individuals. Some, in realistic ways and others in superficial and unrealistic ways. Advertisement of beauty products, online reality shows also known as vlogs, and so on, create impressions about standards for physical appearance, career choice, lifestyle choices, language and so on.

In the long run, these standards can influence choices, desire; for instance, it has been revealed that it influences thought patterns about gender roles. The media is used to propagate ideas, idiosyncrasies, cultures etc. one thing that has pushed cultural imperialism further into the fabrics of the Nigerian society is media imperialism, which is leading to the gradual erosion of the orientation of the Nigerian culture. This is one of the many avenues that the power of the social media is manifested.

Consequently, if the social media can be so powerful to shape even the identity of a nation, could it be that it is capable of also influencing the psychology of individuals about themselves? This study sought to discover if the standards set by social media can affect how individuals see themselves. It also found how social media had influenced the self-image of youths in Nigeria who reside in Osun state.

Scope of the Study

This study was done in Osun state, Nigeria. the study would also focused on social media exposure and exploration of social media platforms and the attendant influence on youths who reside in Osun State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The social media has come to stay and its power cannot be overemphasized. There have been so many advantages and disadvantages associated with social media which numerous researches have revealed. Among the disadvantages are: cybercrime, cyber bullying, addiction, distraction, information overload, fake news etc. on the other hand, the advantages include information spreads faster, room for immediate feedback and so on.

Social media has made indelible impact on lives and routines. It does not take long before any information spreads, once it gets on social media. Fake news and propaganda is now the order of the day. The lack of gatekeepers on social media has made it difficult, if not impossible to hold anyone responsible for information overload or misinformation.

Social media have brought about positive development in many regards, including new career paths, giving the media a new face and room for diversification, etc. Social media, has also brought many negatives as stated

Its contribution to the creation of representation and construction of identity; because of its ubiquity, cannot be overemphasized. The Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex, Queer and Asexual (LGBTIQA) community, feminists, gay rights activists, environmental activist, human rights activists and enthusiasts in

many areas find themselves on social media and create movements through hash tags (#). Whether or not these movements are for good or bad; whether or not they contribute negatively or positively to the lives of the billions of audiences around the globe, social media have done a great job publicizing them. This has made it easy for individuals to identify with whatever they are passionate about.

Researches have revealed that there is a relationship between social media and the self-esteem of youths. However, few researches have been done on how social media can affect their self-image. Self-image is a critical aspect of human psychology as an individual's self-image can determine the individual's mental state. It is important to know the impact of social media on young people especially their self-image, because many issues such as body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, anxiety and depression have been discovered to be associated with excessive social media use.

This research is aimed at investigating if the social media also, has gone as far as influencing the self-image of individuals and the focus here is Nigerian youths that reside in Osun state.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to find out the relationship between social media and the Self-image of Nigerian youths residing in Osun State. The specific objectives are to:

1. find out the influence of social media on the way a person perceives or thinks of himself/herself.
2. ascertain the influence of social media on what a person thinks others think about him/her.
3. identify the role of social media in the creation of thought patterns about what a person would like to become or their ideal self?

Review of Literature

Self-image and Social Media

Self-image, according to Nickerson (2023), is what a person perceives him or herself to be. Furthermore, it also refers to thoughts that can relate an individual's perceived physical appearance, that is, what an individual thinks about his/her appearance, not only this, but, their personality, skills, values and principles and the perception they hold about how they live their lives or the quality of their life.

In other words, self-image speaks of how an individual sees himself or herself, what he or perceives to be what others think of him/her and the way an individual would love to be. Many mental health disorders and self-image are closely relatable. Self-image was first mentioned by Morris Rosenberg in 1965.

Oltman (2014) states these as elements of self-image:

- The way a person perceives or thinks of himself/herself
- What a person thinks others think about them
- What a person would like to be or their ideal self

Self-image is a determinant of self-esteem, self-confidence, body image. It can either be positive or negative. It is worthy of note that the use of social media has become more globalized that it was. Dollarhide (2023) stated that it is an internet-based connection that was created to facilitate information between individuals, organizations, groups and so on. It has evidently gone beyond performing this basic function as researches have revealed the psychological effects it has on people. Researchers have discovered quite a number of things on the impact, influence and overall relationship of social media and the psychology of humans, particularly, young people.

Social Media, Self-Esteem and Body Image

In research conducted by Muqaddass et al (2017) on impact of social media on self-esteem, it was revealed that there is a strong relationship between social media and self- esteem decrease. Further stating that one hour spent on Facebook daily results in a 5.574 decrease in the self-esteem score of an individual.

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D'amore (2023) opines that social media has been discovered to be associated with vices such as cyberbullying, body image issues, and youths who use social media more than three hours a day have a higher risk of developing mental health issues.

Bergman (2023), in the same vein, stated that social media can lead to stress to a Teen's life because they monitor their own updates to see how many likes and comments they get on their pictures and other posts. This can lead to comparison and potential embarrassment on how others view them, especially if someone else gets more likes and attention.

In addition, Aubrey (2023) stated that research was conducted on a group of people within the ages of 17 and 25 revealed that a decreased use in social media brought about more confidence in them. Many of the respondents claimed to be happier and more comfortable with their body weight.

Ruiz. et al (2023) also discovered in their investigation that content observation time significantly predicts body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem.

Sagrera et al (2022) in their investigation found that, increase in daily time spent on social media platforms has a dose-response relationship to increasing self-reported body image issues.

Nierengarten (2017) gathered in an interview with experts that added pressure of social media on influencing body image for adolescents is heightened by the contents on these visually oriented social media platforms created by their peers.

Mahon and Havey (2021) in their research found that adolescents were habitual users of social media, showing preferences for appearance focused platforms.

Furthermore, they discovered that appearance comparisons tend to induce body dissatisfaction when these appearance related goals were not met.

Smith (2023), stated that one of the primary ways social media affects youth self-image is through the propagation of an idealized and often unattainable standard of beauty, adding that the number of likes, comments and followers has become a measure of self-worth. The incessant comparison can also foster a sense of dissatisfaction with one's own life and accomplishments leading to a negative self-perception.

The research, however, recommended the need for media literacy by educating youth about the influence of social media and promoting artificial thinking skills that can help them discern between reality and the illusion of perfection.

Theoretical Framework

The theories that this study is anchored on are:

iii. The Cultivation Effect Theory
iv. Selective Process Theory

The Cultivation Effect Theory.

It was propounded by George Gerbner in 1960. This was part of the cultural indicators project to examine the influence of television on viewers. It states that the more television people watch, the more likely they are to hold a view of reality that is closer to television's depiction of reality.

The theory implies that those exposed to media interpret social realities according to how such realities are portrayed in the media.

Further research has been conducted from where Gerbner stopped in the 60s to look into the effects of other forms of media on the social realities of individuals. It was primarily fictional television but researchers have delved into video games, reality TV, music videos and social media, to mention a few.

This study focuses on the influences that a continuous use of social media has on self-image of youths. Researches have revealed that there is significant impact of social media on the psychology of young people and this theory confirms that the media (which includes the internet, hence, social media, one of the components) has the power to affect people's perception of what is ideal. This can be about any area of life, including their personal and family life. In this case, their self-image.

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The Selective Process Theory

Selective processes are the means by which individuals' preexisting beliefs shape their use of information in a complex environment. Mcwilliams (2016) stated that the Selective Process Theory comprises of four steps. Namely:

1. Selective exposure
2. Selective attention
3. Selective perception
4. Selective retention

Selective exposure is a phenomenon that explains how people choose to focus on information in their environment that aligns with and confirms their current attitudes in order to avoid or reduce cognitive dissonance.

Selective attention is defined as the cognitive process of attending to one or more sensory stimuli, while ignoring all irrelevant sensory inputs.

Selective perception is the unconscious process by which people screen, select and notice objects in their environment. During this process, information tends to be selectively perceived in ways that align with existing attitudes, beliefs and goals.

Selective retention theory states that people tend to retain information that aligns with their existing belief.

This shows that individuals can consciously decide the effects of the media on them. It shows that the effects of continuous use of the media can be determined by them.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey method, using a structured questionnaire to generate data from a sample size of 400 respondents drawn from 1,115,394 youths across Osun State, using the Taro yamane formula as follows:

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

Where
n = Sample Size Desired
N = Overall Population
e = Tolerated/assumed error limit 0.05 on the basis of 95% confidence level

Therefore,

$$n = \frac{1{,}115{,}394}{1 + 1{,}115{,}394(0.05^2)}$$

$$= \frac{1{,}115{,}394}{1 + 1{,}115{,}394\ (0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{52{,}200{,}000}{1 + 2{,}788.485}$$

$$= \frac{1{,}115{,}394}{2{,}789.485}$$

$$= 399.8566$$

$$= 400$$

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Below, is the data gathered from the field study. However, due to time factor and other factors beyond the control of the researcher, only 71 responses we retrieved from the field and all 71 responses were valid.

Section A: Social Media Use

Table 1: Social Media Platforms Used by Osun State Youths

S/N	Social Media Platforms Used	Frequency	Percentage%
1	Facebook	39	54.9
2	Instagram	56	78.9
3	Twitter	32	45.1

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4	WhatsApp	64	90.1
5	LinkedIn	14	19.7
6	Telegram	34	47.9
7	Snapchat	52	73.2
8	Pinterest	26	36.6
9	Tiktok	1	1.4
10	All	7	7.9
	None	0	0
	TOTAL		100

Table 1 shows the use of social media platforms by youths in Osun state. The table revealed that only seven (7) social media platforms were the major and frequently used by Osun state youth. The major social media platforms used by the youths are:

i. Facebook
ii. WhatsApp
iii. Instagram
iv. Telegram
v. Snapchat
vi. Pinterest
vii. Twitter

Table 2: How often in a day do you check your social media pages?

		Frequency	Percent %
Valid	Occasionally	15	21.2
	Rarely	02	2.8
	Very often	54	76.1
	Total	71	100.0

From the table 2, most of the respondents 76.1% check their social media pages, very often. This shows that a higher rate of the respondents are constant users of social media.

Table 3: What is your reason for choosing to have a social media account or accounts?

S/N		RESPONSES
1	Loneliness	10 (14.1%)
2	Its trending	14 (19.7%)
3	I desire to be a social media influencer	15 (21.2%)
4	All of the above	08 (11.2%)
5	None	14 (19.7%)
6	Others	10 (14.1%)
7	I want to showcase myself	00

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		(0%)
		71
	TOTAL	(100%)

From the table above, it was observed that majority of the youth chose social media because: it is trending (19.7%), they are lonely (14.1%), they want to be social media influencers (21.2%), and others reasons include:
1. To kill boredom
2. keep apprise of happenings in the society
3. For entertainment
4. To become aware of daily happenings
5. for communication
6. To make legitimate money
7. For learning purposes

Section B: Self Image

Table 4: Self Image

S/N	QUESTION	STRONGLY AGREE (SA)	AGREE (A)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (SD)	DISAGREE (D)
1.	Your fashion choices have been determined by trends on social media	16(22.5%)	31(43.7%)	10(14.1%)	14(19.7%)
2.	When you are unable to flow with the current fashion trends you tend to feel like you do not fit in	11(15.5%)	12(16.9%)	22(31%)	26(36.6%)
3.	You use filters on your pictures to get more likes	11(15.5%)	16(22.5%)	26(36.6%)	18(25.4%)
4.	Comments about your pictures or posts generally affect your mood (make you happy or sad)	13(18.3%)	24(33.8%)	19(26.8%)	15(21.1%)
5.	You monitor likes and comments on your social media posts	27(38%)	21(29.6%)	12(16.9%)	11(15.5%)
6.	When you get a new like, positive comment or new follower, it uplifts your mood	26(36.6%)	28(39.4%)	7(9.9%)	10(14.1%)
7.	You feel the need to do more when you view the posts of your social media friends and followers	18(25.4%)	23(32.4)	18(25.4%)	12(16.9%)

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8.	You feel satisfied with your life and achievements compared to the profile info and posts of your friends and followers	23(32.4%)	35(49.3%)	11(15.5%)	2(2.8%)
	TOTAL	71		100%	

In table 4 above, majority (43.7%) of the respondents agreed that their fashion choices are determined by social media trends. On the other hand, majority (36.6%) disagree that they feel like misfits when they cannot flow with fashion trends. (36.6%) which is the majority, responded in the negative when asked if their use of filter is to get more likes. Meanwhile, majority (33.8%) agreed that comments on their posts affect their mood. In the same vein, 38% of the respondents, which is the majority, said that they monitor likes and comments on their posts. Also, 39.4%, who make up the majority, here, are happy when they get a new like or follower. 32.4% of the respondents disagreed that they feel the need to do more when they see the posts of their friends or follower. 49.3%, who are the majority also said they are satisfied with their achievements compared to the profile and posts of their friends.

This shows that individuals are affected in one way or the other by social media reactions affect the respondents' self-image in one way or another.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

What is the effect of social media on the way a person perceives or thinks of himself/herself?

From the results gathered, it is evident that social media can influence how youths perceive themselves. For instance, in table 4, majority (43.7%) of the respondents make fashion choices based on trends. This is interpreted as social media influencing the decision-making process of majority of the respondents. They do not want to be left out in the ever-changing world of fashion, obviously their appearance matters to them, therefore can influence how they see themselves.

In addition, comments and likes on their posts can affect their mood positively or negatively as seen in table 4. Social media gives room for people to make any kind of comment about any aspect of people's life which has resulted to what is commonly referred to as cyber bullying. Therefore, if people can feel bullied by comments it means that it has influenced or is beginning to affect how they see themselves. In other words, the feedback from their audiences, changes how they see themselves or feel about themselves. These findings go in line with Smith (2023), who stated that one of the primary ways social media affects youth self-image is through the propagation of an idealized and often unattainable standard of beauty, adding that the number of likes, comments and followers has become a measure of self-worth.

What is the impact of social media on what a person thinks others think about them?

From the findings, respondents monitor likes and comments on their posts. This shows that individuals are interested in what people think about them. Also, from responses gathered, it is evident that the nature of responses can affect their mood, as seen in table 4.

In addition, getting a new follower or like, it uplifts their mood. This is an indicator that the interest in the attention they get shows that they bother about what people think of them.

In table 2, also, respondents are seen to often check their social media pages to keep in touch and be abreast of current trends as seen in table 4.

This agrees with Bergman (2023), who stated that social media can lead to stress to a Teen's life because they monitor their own updates to see how many likes and comments they get on their pictures and other posts. This can lead to comparison and potential embarrassment on how others view them, especially if someone else gets more likes and attention.

What is the role of social media in the creation of thought patterns what a person would like to be or their ideal self?

Table 4 talks about being trendy as it is one of the major reasons why respondents use social media. Also, respondents desire to be social media influencer, which is one of the fastest growing online career paths. This is who they want to be and for some people, it is who they think their ideal self should be; "Up-to-date" and "famous"

Fashion choices, as seen in table 4, also, are about trends. Likes and comments on posts are monitored by respondents to keep track of what others are thinking based on their words and action.

Conclusion

Social media has changed the face of so many things. Fashion, ideologies, thought patterns and drawing from the findings of this research, self-image.

This research has revealed that social media plays significant role in formation of self-image and the power of the social media to impact individuals psychologically should not be overlooked.

Social media should be a tool in the hands of young people to solve problems of all kinds rather than it becoming a weapon for self-destruction.

The many advantages of social media can be harnessed through proper enlightenment on how to use it profitably.

Recommendations

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

1. Media literacy should be reinforced in order to help bring consumers of media content to differentiate reality from what is staged. They should be exposed to what is true and what is false.
2. Orientation should be done by the various institutions of learning about the vast advantages of social media. This is because so many young people are not so exposed to these in Nigeria. It is evident from the findings, young people had limited reasons for joining social media platforms. This would reduce online vices.
3. Age restrictions online should be taken more seriously by administrators of the various platforms and proper monitoring of teenagers should be ensured by parents and guardians in order to protect them from social media vices.

Suggestions for Further Study

1. Social media and self-image formation among youths
2. Social media and mental well-being of youths

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