

INFLUENCE OF SELF-ESTEEM AND BODY DISSATISFACTION ON LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG UNDERGRADUATES

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of self-esteem and body dissatisfaction on life satisfaction among Undergraduates of Benue State University Makurdi, Nigeria. The quest for life satisfaction among undergraduates has called for the need to examine factors that may serve as hindrance for its achievement. A survey research design was utilized for the study. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to sample undergraduates and 202 undergraduates comprising of 93 (46.0%) males and 109 (54.0%) females respectively. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSS), Body Dissatisfaction Scale (BDS) and Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS) were used for data collection. Three hypotheses were tested using simple and multiple regressions. It was found among others that self-esteem had no significant influence on life satisfaction among undergraduates. The result also showed a significant positive influence of body dissatisfaction on life satisfaction among undergraduates and a significant joint influence of self-esteem and body dissatisfaction on life satisfaction among undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi. Based on the study findings, recommendations were made.

Keywords: Self- Esteem, Body Dissatisfaction and Life Satisfaction

Introduction

Life satisfaction is an important construct in positive psychology and assesses an individual's overall appraisal of quality of life based on his or her chosen criteria, including the perception that one is progressing towards important life goals. The construct of life satisfaction presents the cognitive component of the multidimensional construct of subjective well-being. Evaluation of life satisfaction is thus based on a cognitive appraisal of the overall quality of a person's life based on self-selected standards (Unni & Geir, 2013). Pavot and Diener (2010) define life satisfaction as a judgmental process, in which individuals assess the quality of their lives on the basis of their own unique criteria. Life satisfaction is discussed in the form of optimistic relationship, person feels happy and satisfied from his own life and life proceeding on the best right path. Every person makes judgment about life which is called life satisfaction (Diener & Suh, 1997). Life satisfaction refers to a person's subjective and global evaluations of the positive aspects of his or her life. Variables like good job and mental health and positive life events, correlate significantly with high level of life satisfaction (Easterlin, 2006).

Life satisfaction is considered to be a central construct in relation to other emotional, social, and behavioral constructs, and one of the variables that may have an impact on life satisfaction among students is self-esteem (Oberle, Schonert-Reichl & Zumbo, 2011). Rosenberg (1965) defines self-esteem as an individual's set of thoughts and feelings about his or her own worth and importance. This definition reflects the notion of global or general self-esteem or self-worth. Self-esteem is a large part of students' self-understanding and is likely to be a fluctuating and dynamic construct, susceptible to internal and external influences during youthful age (Erol & Orth, 2011). According to Diener and Diener (1995), both self-esteem and life satisfaction indicates one's global evaluations, yet the direction of these evaluations is different. Self-esteem reflects an individual's perceptions and evaluations of himself or herself, whereas life satisfaction involves the individual's evaluation of one's life as a whole including different areas of life such as school, family, and friends as well as oneself.

The importance of self-esteem is underscored by decades of theory development and research supporting its link with a range of positive outcomes including psychological health and well-being during adolescence. Conversely, low self-esteem has been related to symptoms of depression and anxiety. In the face of challenging life circumstances, high self-esteem may serve a role as a coping resource and protective factor in that individuals with high self-esteem are assumed to show more positive coping and better adjustment in relation to adverse life events, which may further promote health and well-being and, conversely, individuals with relatively low self-esteem are more vulnerable to this effect (Moksnes & Espnes, 2012). Individuals with high self-esteem may also seek and receive more social support, which may facilitate more adaptive coping behaviors and overall adjustment (Moksnes, 2010). On the other hand, individuals with low self-esteem may experience to have no comfort in themselves and their capabilities and to be more challenged regarding the ability to identify coping resources, and to use them for intended purposes. This may lead to more vulnerability for negative health outcomes and lower life satisfaction (Orth, Robins & Widaman, 2011). Notwithstanding, the genetic and heritable effects of personality, such as positive and negative affect and temperament, there are many environmental, familial, and

social variables, besides self-esteem such as body image included in the present study may also explain variance in students' life satisfaction. Body dissatisfaction is another strong variable that stands to have great impact on how youths evaluate their life satisfaction.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) (2013), several individuals make the attempt to change something about their bodies. The attempt to change complexion and facial looks for example is more common among blacks possibly due to dissatisfaction with their body images. Approximately 77% of Nigerian women have been found to engage practices to change their complexion due to dissatisfaction with their skin colour (WHO, 2013). Body dissatisfaction is defined as the negative perceptions and feelings a person has about their body and is influenced by factors such as body shape and appearance, attitudes towards weight gain, and cultural norms in relation to an ideal body (Peat, Peyerl, & Muehlenkamp, 2008; Phillips & de Man, 2010; Slade, 1994; Slevic & Tiggemann, 2011). It is the mental representation that creates of what we think we look like which may or may not bear a close relation to how others actually see us (Cash & Smolak, 2011). Others have conceptualized it as body mass index which is related to a person's weight (Cash, 2012). This suggests that the weight and appearance of a person are integral component of body image appraisal. Body image perception is subject to all kinds of distortions from internal elements like our emotions, moods, early experiences, attitudes of our parents, and these strongly influences our life satisfaction (Warren, Castillo, & Gleaves, 2009). Pre-occupation with body dissatisfaction is widespread among American women, and, to a lesser extent, among males. It is found to be a driving force in eating disorders and attempts at changing ones' complexion (Durkin & Paxton, 2012).

There are several independent factors that have been shown to negatively affect body image. These include peer factors and consumerism, family characteristics, media portrayal of the thin ideal, individual personality traits (Vander Wal & Thelen, 2000), body weight, stigmatization and health messages (Paquette & Raine, 2004). The extent to which these factors interact with each other and contribute to body image development may vary according to age, gender and key developmental milestones, level of education and more importantly race. A person's body image is dynamic; fluctuating as new life experiences are encountered (Paquette & Raine, 2004). Body image discontent is common in western societies and seemed to be creeping into the African societies possibly due to imbibitions of foreign cultures and increase literacy rate (Altabe, 1998). Individuals become aware of what is perceived as ideal body image and internalize these societal body ideals, which can lead to life dissatisfaction (Yamamiya, 2005). According to Yam, (2013) cultural factors influence the formation of body image hence very crucial when trying to understand how body image perceptions fluctuate. Body image investment, such as high levels of importance placed on body image, was related to low self-esteem, worse self-evaluation, and less life satisfaction (Jung & Lee, 2006). Body shame which stemmed from the inability to meet the societal body ideals predicted life dissatisfaction; higher levels of body shame related to higher levels of life dissatisfaction.

Statement of the Problem

The present struggle for life satisfaction among undergraduate students across the globe and especially Nigeria is a great thing of concern that requires the attention of scholars and researchers. There are various determinants of life satisfaction such as self-esteem and body image dissatisfaction among others. However, most research studies have focused on

other determinants of life satisfaction such as having a good job, social economic status in the society, psychological wellbeing leaving out self-esteem and body image dissatisfaction which is the lacuna this study seeks to examine among undergraduates. Self-esteem and body dissatisfaction have been indicated to have a create impact on the life satisfaction of individual as low self-esteem can reduce an individual's level of interaction and smartness to attain life satisfaction. Also body image especially among female have been seen as a major factor that contributes to life satisfaction as the image of one's body create distorted self evaluation, self-confidence and negative thoughts.

It seems that body dissatisfaction among undergraduates can affect their life satisfaction. Despite the importance of identifying psychological problems and mitigating these problems, very few studies have been conducted in this regard. Several studies have focused on each of these variables but most of them have neglected the components of life satisfaction. Also, limited research has compared these variables among undergraduates. In a similar vein, despite the importance of self-esteem and body dissatisfaction in determining life satisfaction among undergraduates little research has been carried to show their relationship which still lacks substantive and empirical evidence. It is on this note that it is imperative to carry out this study and have substantive empirical evidence on how self-esteem and body dissatisfaction influence life satisfaction of undergraduates.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of self-esteem and body dissatisfaction on life satisfaction among undergraduate. Therefore, the study aims at determining:

- (1) the influence of self-esteem on life satisfaction among undergraduate.
- (2) the influence of body dissatisfaction on life satisfaction among undergraduate.
- (3) the joint influence of self-esteem and body dissatisfaction on life satisfaction among undergraduates of Benue State University Makurdi.

Hypotheses were tested based on the three specific purpose of the study.

Research Method

Research Design

The design of the study was a cross sectional survey design. Survey design studies are mainly concerned with the gathering of information about variables from a representative sample of the population (Olaitan & Nwoke, 1998). This design was suitable for this study since the researcher gathered information on the influence of self-esteem and body dissatisfaction on life satisfaction among undergraduates.

Setting

This research was conducted in Benue State University, Makurdi. Benue State University is a State-owned University located in Makurdi the Benue State capital, Nigeria. Its 2017 student enrollment was over 19,000 from nine faculties. It offers undergraduate and graduate programs with a catalog of over 50 graduate programs across seven colleges. It is accredited by the National Universities Commission.

Participants

The participants for the study comprised 203 undergraduates of Benue State University Makurdi with the age range of 17 to 37 years and mean age of 24.65 (SD=4.5). Out of the total participants of 203 undergraduates, 97(47.8%) were male, 106(52.2%) were female, 198 (97.5%) were Christians while 5 (2.5%) were Islam. Furthermore, among the undergraduates, 50 (24.6%) were married, 144 (70.9%) were single, 4 (2.0%) separated and 5(2.5%) were widowed. Also 103(50.7) participants were Tiv by Tribe, 69(34.0) were Idoma and 31(15.3%) were other tribes. Finally, 41(20.2%) were 100level undergraduates, 58(28.6%) were 200level, 56(27.6) were 300level and 48(23.6%) were 400level undergraduates.

Sampling

The simple random sampling technique (probability sampling method) was used for the selection of the subjects who were undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi from various departments and faculties. The random sampling technique was appropriate for this study because it provided equal opportunity for all subjects that were selected by the researcher and participants were requested to complete the questionnaire on voluntary basis. Also informed consent forms were distributed to all participants assuring them of their confidentiality and adhering to research ethics of psychology.

Instruments

This study made use of Body Dissatisfaction Scale, Life Satisfaction Scale and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale for data collection. To measure the body image of the participants, the body dissatisfaction scale developed by Garner, Olmstead & Polivy (1983) was used. This scale assesses people's feeling and evaluation of their body. There are in sum fourteen items. There is no right or wrong answer to these statements, so you do not need to think too much on each statement. Alpha internal consistency for body dissatisfaction scale is .89 with a high validity of above 0.68. The scale has 9 items to be answered on seven likert-point ranging from 1= always to 7= never.

To measure the quality of life of the participants, the life satisfaction scale developed by Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985) was used to measure global cognitive judgment of one's life satisfaction. The scale has 7-item to be answered on a seven point scale that ranges from 7 strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree. The analysis of the scale's reliability showed good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.74$). The scale reliability using the Cronbach alpha index is $\alpha = .84$.

To measure self-esteem of the participants, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale developed by Rosenberg (1965) was used to measure both the positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale has 10 items and is a one-dimensional. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The internal consistency of the scale range from 0.77 to 0.888. Test-retest reliability of the scale range from 0.82 to 0.85. Criterion validity is 0.55 (Rosenberg, 1965).

Procedure

A total of 203 copies of the questionnaires were administered randomly to participants from first and second campuses who were undergraduates of Benue state University, Makurdi from various faculties and departments of the University. The

questionnaires were shared to the participants after they were given the informed consent forms to assure them of confidentiality. Students were so inclined to participate in the study because it was a topic that was about their body image and life satisfaction; girls who accepted to participate in the study were so amazed about the issue of body image because most of them were struggling with their body image by using artificial materials to augment their body. There was no any challenge in the administration of the questionnaires as students showed interest in participation. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and simple percentages were used to summarize data on the demographic features of the respondents. On the other hand, simple and multiple linear regression were used for the testing of the hypotheses.

Results

Table 1: Simple linear regression analysis showing influence of self-esteem on life satisfaction among undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi

Variable	R	R ²	df	F	B	t	p
Constant	.439	.193	1,201	48.089		13.449	.000
Self-esteem					.439	6.935	.000

Table 1 revealed that $R=.439$, $R^2=.193$, $F(1,201)=48.089$, $p<.01$]. This result indicates that self-esteem accounted for 19.3% of the total variance observed in life satisfaction of the undergraduates. The result further showed that self-esteem ($\beta=.439$) had a significant positive influence on life satisfaction. The hypothesis was thus confirmed. This means that the higher the level of self-esteem, the higher the life satisfaction of the undergraduates.

Table 2: Simple linear regression analysis showing influence of body image on life satisfaction among undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi

Variable	R	R ²	df	F	B	t	p
Constant	.111	.012	1,201	2.490		41.066	.000
Body image					-.111	-1.578	.116

Table 2 reveals that $R=.111$, $R^2=.012$, $F(1,201)=2.490$, $p>.05$]. Based on this result, hypothesis two was not confirmed. Thus, body image has no significant influence on life satisfaction among undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi

Table 3: Multiple linear regression analysis showing joint influence of self-esteem and body image on life satisfaction among undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi

Variable	R	R ²	df	F	B	t	p
Constant	.441	.195	1,200	24.189		11.875	.000
Self-esteem					.433	-.645	.000
Body image					-.041	-.645	.520

Table 3 reveals $R=.441$, $R^2=.195$, $F(1,200)=24.189$, $p<.01$]. The result showed that self-esteem and body image jointly accounted for 19.5% of the total variance observed in life satisfaction of the undergraduates. Thus, the hypothesis was confirmed. This implies that

there is joint significant influence of self-esteem and body image on life satisfaction among undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi

Discussion of the Findings

Hypothesis one which states that, self-esteem will significantly influence life satisfaction among undergraduates of Benue State University was significant. This finding implies that, undergraduates with high self-esteem will tend to attain more life satisfaction as compare to those with low self-esteem. This finding agrees with Asima and Aqsa (2015) who also found the connection between satisfaction with life and self esteem. The result is also in line with Unni and Geir (2013) who found gender differences on life satisfaction and self-esteem as well as the association between self-esteem and life satisfaction in Norwegian adolescents aged 13–18 years.

Hypothesis two which states that body image will significantly influence life satisfaction among undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi was not significant. This finding implies that, undergraduates body image do not determine their life satisfaction. This finding disagrees with Pankaj (2016) who elucidated the nature and extent of relationship between body image satisfaction and life satisfaction of the diagnosed Human Immune Virus/Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome ((HIV/AIDS) patients and the individuals with no known chronic physical and/or mental health illnesses. The result is also not in line with Victor (2009) who found the association between sexual identity, body image and life satisfaction among women with and without physical disability.

Hypothesis three which states that, self-esteem and body image will have a significant joint influence on life satisfaction among undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi was significant. This finding implies that, undergraduates with high self-esteem and accepted body image will tend to attain more life satisfaction as compare to those with low self-esteem and unaccepted body image. This finding agrees with Abbasi and Aisha (2015) who determined the relationship among self-compassion, body image, and life satisfaction of university students; and determined the role of various demographics (gender and parental education) in relation to variables of the study. The result was also in line with Saleh (2013) who investigated the predictive role of life satisfaction, self-esteem, body image, gender and marital status on depressive symptoms.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it is concluded that self-esteem is a strong determinant of life satisfaction among undergraduates of Benue State University while body image is not a determinant of life satisfaction among undergraduates of Benue State University.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings the following recommendations were made:

1. Students should be trained by their parents in such a way that will enhance their self-esteem. These ways may include not nagging at them always but giving them listening hears and also allowing them to express their views.
2. Students who are found to exhibit low self-esteem should be encouraged to attend counseling or therapy to help such students build self-esteem.

3. The university can provide extra activities to students that geared towards helping them building more self-esteem. Such activities may include, organising quizz competition and debates to help build thier confidence thereby buildinh thier self-esteem.

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