



DIMENSIONS OF SELF-APPRAISAL AND PERCEIVED PEER REJECTION AMONG ENTRY LEVEL TERTIARY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Evidence has shown that adjustment problems associated with peer rejection impair a victim's emotional health, having lasting negative consequences long after victimization has ceased. Thus, understanding factors that place adolescents and youths at risk for later peer rejection is an important research objective. Accordingly, the main aim of this study is to explore influence of skin colour satisfaction, self-esteem and self-attractiveness on perceived peer rejection among entry level tertiary students. A cross-sectional research design was adopted for the study. Data was collected from a sample of 341 entry level students. Stratified random sampling was employed in selecting the participants for the study. Each faculty in the University represented a stratum within the sampling frame. A structured questionnaire (comprising of four standardized scales) was used to collect data from the participants of the study. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested using multiple regression and t-test of independent measures. Age, skin colour satisfaction, self-esteem and physical attractiveness jointly and independently predicted perceived peer rejection among entry level undergraduates in University of Ibadan [$R=.466$, $R^2 = .217$, $F = 13.818$; $P<.01$]. Skin colour satisfaction ($\beta=-.158$; $t=-2.766$; $P<.05$) independently accounted for about 15.8% variance in perceived peer rejection, self-esteem ($\beta=-.251$; $t=-3.944$; $P<.05$) independently accounted for about 25.1% variance while physical attractiveness ($\beta=-.042$; $t=-3.739$; $P<.05$) independently accounted for about 4.2% variance in peer rejection among freshmen in the university. Gender also had significant influence on perceived peer rejection among fresh students in the university of Ibadan $t(253) = -3.149$, $P < .05$) with female students reporting significantly higher perceived peer rejection than their male counterpart. Given the reality of the level of self-evaluation in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic qualities, and its subsequent psychological effects on individuals in today's society, changes must occur both on an individual and societal level to decrease the incongruent feeling not espoused by our culture in order to reduce self and body image disparagement.

Keywords: Peer rejection, Skin colour, Self-esteem, Physical attractiveness

Word count: 312



BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Peer rejection has increasingly been recognized as a major social problem. Studies have shown that up to 1 in 10 youth have been the target of some form of rejection during the school year (Rigby, 2011; Solberg & Olweus, 2003). In addition, approximately 10% of adolescents have been identified as chronic or severe victims of peer rejection (Houlston & Smith, 2010). Victims of rejection have been found to be at an elevated risk for a wide-array of psychosocial and behavioral adjustment problems. For example, consequences that have been associated with peer rejection have included depression, loneliness, physical health problems, social withdrawal, alcohol and/or drug use, school absence and avoidance, decrease in school performance, self-harm, and suicidal ideation (Leadbeater & Hoglund, 2009).

From a Nigerian perspective, research has shown that many adolescent girls in our society now partake in skin bleaching in order to conform to peer norms and gain acceptance among peer groups (Durosaro, 2012). Kpanake, Munoz Sastre & Mullet (2010) estimated that up to 77% of women in Lagos have used creams to de-pigment or lighten their skin complexion at one point in their lives. The use of bleaching creams and other skin altering techniques by adolescents to boost perceived attractiveness and self-esteem among peers has thus become a major social problem among Nigerian youths. Apart from the psychological consequences of skin bleaching, which include delusional beauty which could degenerate into depressive episodes and suicidal tendencies in the face of peer rejection, other consequences include skin lesions, epidermal atrophy, exogenous ochronosis, eczema, body odour, warts acne and a host of other physical damages to the skin.

Interestingly, there are now similar concerns for male adolescents in Nigeria beginning from childhood. Boys are now being pressured by social standards of appearance that require their bodies to be muscular and athletic (Ukegbu, Onimawo & Ukegbu, 2007). As a result boys who do not meet these new expectations may come to devalue the self and risk peer rejection. Males now strive to meet new standards of physical attractiveness that require many to attend to their physique including muscularity, biceps and abs by engaging in unsupervised body building activities which may result in body disfigurements, muscle problems, respiratory challenges and abuse of steroids (Osisanya, Awala & Cole, 2002.). Furthermore, evidence has shown that the adjustment problems associated with peer rejection impair a victim's emotional health, having lasting negative consequences long after victimization has ceased (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001). Thus, understanding factors that place adolescents and youths at risk for later peer rejection is an important research objective. Accordingly, the main aim of this study is to explore the influence of skin colour satisfaction, self-esteem and self-attractiveness on perceived peer rejection among entry level tertiary students.

Peer rejection describes the lack of recognition and reception that adolescents receive from their peers. Peer rejection has been defined as repeated exposure to rebuff on the part of one or more people, often involving a real or perceived imbalance in strength or power (Camodeca, Goossens, Terwogt, & Schuengel, 2002). Peer rejection is pervasive in schools, with over three-quarters of all children and adolescents reporting some form of harassment by peers (Hoover, Oliver, & Hazler, 1992). More importantly, approximately 10% of adolescents have been identified as chronically, frequently, or severely victimized by their peers (Nansel et al., 2001). The extent to which individuals are accepted by their peers is considered to be an important



indicator of social and emotional well-being across the lifespan (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006). Beginning in early childhood, persons who gain their peers' acceptance often show signs of positive well-being, whereas persons who do not gain their peers' acceptance typically exhibit a variety of social and emotional difficulties.

Peer relations are an important part of childhood and have particular significance during middle childhood, which is a period of transition from early childhood to adolescence. During this period adolescents' social needs change accordingly; from the need for peer acceptance at the beginning of middle childhood to the intimate dyadic friendships of pre-adolescence (Nangle, Erdley, Newman, Mason, & Carpenter, 2003). Successful peer relations enhance interpersonal competence and directly affect long-term outcomes in adulthood, while poor peer relations have implications for later life social problems and deviance (Ladd & Troop-Gordon, 2003). A wide range of publications offer first attempts to identify etiological as well as social, behavioral, and neurocognitive correlates of peer rejection. However, this study places emphasis on skin colour satisfaction, self-esteem and self-attractiveness on perceived peer rejection among tertiary students.

Skin colour satisfaction is defined as one's level of gratification and contentment with one's skin colour. Skin colour satisfaction by the differentiation in lightness or darkness of skin tone, continues to be a significant issue in African communities today. Skin color has many different levels of symbolism for Africans, and there exists a preponderance of colloquial (both positive and negative) terms used to describe their various shades of skin. While many dark-complexioned African view their skin color proudly, others are ambivalent and view their blackness as a "mark of oppression" (Cowie & Smith, 2010). Conversely, many light-complexioned Africans have been belittled because they do not look "black enough" (Grills & Ollendick, 2002). Issues such as skin color; conflicts over other physical features; and the presence of anger and hostility toward themselves, individuals have been among a number of social artifacts and presumed social behavioral indicators.

In relation to peer relations, skin colour differentiation has been found to play a role in the social network of individuals. Social networks can increase capital in a wide variety of ways, and one of the most important is through one's spouse. Light-skinned people of color are not more likely to be married than their darker-skinned counterparts, but light-skinned women, particularly African Americans, are likely to marry higher status spouses (Harriger, Calogero, Witherington, & Smith, 2010). Study after study has shown that light-skinned African American women marry spouses with higher levels of education, higher incomes, or higher levels of occupational prestige, than their darker-skinned counterparts (Jung & Lee, 2006). This phenomenon allows light-skinned people to 'marry up' and essentially exchange the high status of their skin tone for the high status of education, income, or occupation in their spouse (Webster and Driskell 2003).

Practical evidence of the implication of skin colour to social perceptions is highlighted in the ever-increasing opportunities to alter skin colour. One of the oldest traditions of this sort is skin bleaching. Skin-bleaching creams go by many names and are commonly used in places including Mexico, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Jamaica, the Philippines, Japan, India, Tanzania, Senegal, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, and less so, but also USA (Mahe, Fatimata and Ari; 2004). For many people around the world, skin bleaching seems like one of the few ways to get a piece of the pie in a highly racialized society. Skin lightening products constitute a multibillion dollar industry.

Self-esteem is about how one appraises oneself; about the faith put into one's own person and how satisfied one is with oneself (Hunter, 2005). This evaluation of the self is often stable and enduring. Researchers often distinguish between an emotional, or inner, self-esteem, and a knowledge based, or outer, self-esteem. Inner self-esteem is characterized by unconditional love



for oneself and self-respect. It develops during the first years of life through parental affirmation and psychological processes within the individual, which in turn combine to make up an inner representation of stability, safety and self-appreciation. The inner self-esteem can be either positive or negative depending on the early experiences of the child. A person with high inner self-esteem demonstrates awareness of his or her own feelings and needs, as well as a positive view of life (Oladipo, 2007).

Adolescents who face peer rejection are often disliked by many peers. This category includes adolescents who do not have good social skills and who tend to be withdrawn (Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, 1993). The rejected group is often referred to as the polar opposite of the popular group. Negative behavior, such as aggression, in combination with withdrawal and bad social skills can lead to alienation and disapproval among peers. Jackson and Bracken (1998) found that rejected adolescents scored lower than the popular group on total self-esteem, as well as on every investigated subscale of self-esteem. They also scored significantly lower than the average and unclassified groups on the scale of social self-concept. Further, the rejected group was the only group which scored significantly lower than any other on the scale of physical abilities. Longitudinal research show that rejected status tend to be fairly stable over time (Patterson, 2008).

Physical attractiveness is the degree to which a person's physical features are considered aesthetically pleasing or beautiful (Andreoni & Petrie, 2008). The term often implies sexual attractiveness or desirability, but can also be distinct from the two. It is one of those characteristics that one is directly able to evaluate when one meets someone, sit next to on a bus to work or pass in the street. The study of attractiveness has appeared in numerous areas of inquiry. 'What is beautiful is good,' attributing positive qualities at initial interaction based on physical attractiveness (Dion, Bersheid & Walster, 1972) and the halo effect (Thorndike, 1920) can be applied to countless everyday interactions in impression formation. The halo effect suggests that attractive individuals are perceived as possessing more favorable qualities, from personality to achieving an overall higher quality of life. The impact of physical attractiveness on perception has been thoroughly documented (Luxen & Van de Vijver, 2006). There is a high level of consistency of judgment of attractiveness, even across cultures (Luxen et al, 2006).

One pervasive concern among adolescents and adults alike is the concern about physical appearance and attractiveness. While the pursuit of beauty dates back to ancient times, the last decades have witnessed an increase in the time, money and energy invested in efforts to enhance one's appearance (e.g., American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 2012). These fervent efforts to improve appearance are not surprising given the social rewards of physical attractiveness, including increased media and personal attention, more positive interpersonal treatment, and increased perceptions of social competence, assertiveness, and intelligence (Rosenblat, 2008).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The cognitive approach to body image dissatisfaction is of the view that people who are preoccupied with body size and shape interpret information related to body image in a biased manner. Specifically, these individuals may differentially attend to and remember body-related stimuli, which in turn perpetuate dissatisfaction with their body images (Williamson, & Blouin, 2000). Further individuals may judge ambiguous situations or stimuli in a manner congruent with their negative beliefs regarding their appearance (Jackman, Williamson, Netemeyer, & Anderson,



1996). For instance a teenager preoccupied with weight may interpret another's laughter as directed toward his body size, rather than a funny joke. It is assumed that this biased cognitive processing occurs automatically, outside the conscious awareness of the individual (Williamson, 1996).

Bandura's social cognitive theory supports the hypothesis that women may pursue actions that would help them realize modeled behavior in the society. Bandura (1986) notes that the social learning theory (foundational theory of the social cognitive theory) posits that the more attractive an individual finds a "social agent," the more the individual will try to imitate the "agent." Thomsen (2002) found that women observe and compare their bodies with the physical attributes of idealized female media images. The social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) would posit that the physical attributes of idealized female media images serve as symbols of vicarious stimulus that influence women's perceptions of reality.

Bandura (1986) relates that people continually observe the successes and failures of others to determine what societal behaviors represent preferred behavioral norms. Martin and Kennedy (1993) note that continuous exposure to media representations of physical attractiveness may have an effect on females' "self-perceptions of physical attractiveness" (p.528). Harrison (1997) also bases her research on the social learning theory, which she posits provides a basis for explaining why some young women are susceptible to media representations of role models who exhibit thin-ideal body images. Harrison suggests that Bandura's social learning process of modeling provides one "explanation for how young women may come to believe in the thin ideal and become motivated to engage in extreme dieting behaviors to meet this ideal".

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Harvey, LaBeach, Pridgen and Gocial (2005) examined the extent to which racial contexts moderate the importance and function of intragroup skin-tone stigma among Black Americans. They found that Black students in the predominantly Black university placed significantly higher importance on skin tone than Black students in the predominantly White university. Bond and Cash (1992) examined the role of skin color (i.e., its lightness-darkness) as it pertained to various body-image measures among 66 light-, medium-, and darkskinned Black college females. Although actual skin color did not predict various facets of body image satisfaction, skin color satisfaction was positively related to satisfaction with overall appearance and with the face. Young-Hyman, Schlundt, Herman-Wenderoth and Bozylinski (2003) evaluated the contributions of weight status, skin tone, peer teasing, and parental appraisals of child's size to self-esteem and psychosocial adjustment in overweight African American children.

Bowker, & Rubin (2009) carried out a longitudinal study of 1,090 Norwegian adolescents from the age of 13–23 (54 % males) that explored whether peer acceptance can act as a moderator and protect global self-esteem against the negative effects of experiencing low closeness in relationships with parents. Results showed that peer acceptance was found to have a general protective effect on global self-esteem for all adolescents. Nesdale and Lambert (2007) examined effects of experimentally manipulated peer rejection on children's negative affect, self-esteem, and maladaptive social behavior. Analysis of their self-reported negative affect, self-esteem, and maladaptive social behavior, revealed that, regardless of the source of the rejection (i.e., an individual versus a group), peer rejection caused a significant increase in the children's negative affect, but had no effect on their self-esteem. The findings also indicated that peer rejection instigated an increased tendency towards maladaptive social behavior, and that the latter effect was fully mediated by the children's negative affect.

Pelyhe (2013) examined the effect of peer group rejection on children's state anxiety and self-esteem, as well as their attitudes towards the rejecting group and an outgroup that had the



same or different ethnicity to the participants. Children's subsequent ratings indicated that peer group rejection caused a decrease in self-esteem and an increase in anxiety, dislike for the rejecting ingroup, but greater liking for the outgroup, regardless of its ethnicity. Marini, Dane & Bosacki (2006) examined whether self-esteem mediated the association between peer relationships and internalizing problems (i.e., depression and social anxiety). Regression analyses indicated that self-esteem partially mediated the relations between social isolation, friendship attachment (alienation) and both depression and social anxiety, whereas friendship attachment (trust) was a partial mediator for depression only.

HYPOTHESES

1. Age, skin colour satisfaction, self-esteem and physical attractiveness will jointly and independently predict perceived peer rejection among entry level undergraduates in university of Ibadan.
2. Female entry level undergraduates will significantly report higher levels of perceived peer rejection than their male counterpart

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Sampling Technique

A cross-sectional research design was adopted for the study. The population was made up of entry level undergraduates of the University of Ibadan. The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination formula was used to obtain a representative sample of 350 based on an estimated total population of fresh intakes by the University. Stratified random sampling was employed in selecting the participants for the study. Each faculty in the University represented a stratum within the sampling frame. A structured questionnaire (comprising of four standardized scales) was used to collect relevant data from the participants of the study. All scales were pilot-tested among a population with similar characteristics to the study population

Instruments

Skin color satisfaction was assessed using the Skin Color Questionnaire (SCQ; Bond & Cash, 1992). Three skin-color items were administered to participants. The first SCQ item was "HOW satisfied are you with the shade (lightness or darkness) of your own skin color?," response alternatives ranged from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 9 (extremely satisfied). The second item was "Compared to most Black people, I believe my skin color is . . .," responses ranged from 1 (extremely light) to 9 (extremely dark). The third item was "If I could change my skin color, I would make it . . .," response alternatives ranged from 1 (much lighter) to 9 (much darker), with 5 anchored as exactly the same. The three SCQ items are designed to assess skin-color satisfaction, self-perceived skin color, and ideal color, respectively. A Cronbach alpha of 0.91 was obtained for this study.

Self-esteem. was measured using a Self Esteem Scale by Adanijo and Oyefeso (1986). The scale consists of 15 items to which the participants expressed their degree of agreement on a 5-point likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The authors reported an internal consistency coefficient of $r = .79$. It is a widely used measure of self-esteem. Self-esteem was categorized into high and low self-esteem. A Cronbach alpha of 0.68 was obtained for this study.

Self-perceived bodily attractiveness was measured using the 35-item Body Esteem Scale (BES; Franzoi and Shields, 1984). This widely-used instrument measures participants' global attitudes towards their bodies and also includes sex-specific subscales. For women, these measure sexual attractiveness, weight concern, and physical condition. For men, they measure physical attractiveness, upper body strength, and physical condition. The test consists of a list of



body parts (e.g., “legs,” “nose”) and physical attributes (e.g., “energy level,” “physical coordination”), and participants indicate their feelings towards each of them on a scale of 1 to 5 corresponding to “have strong negative feelings” and “have strong positive feelings,” respectively. Franzoi and Shields (1984) reported Cronbach’s alphas for the scale ranging between .78 and .87. A Cronbach alpha of 0.74 was obtained for this study.

Perceived peer rejection was measured using the rejection sensitivity questionnaire (RSQ; Park, 2007). The rejection sensitivity questionnaire measures two components: anxious concerns about rejection (the affective component) and expectations of being rejected (the cognitive component. The 18-item scale is scored based on a 6-point response format ranging from 1=very unconcerned to 6=very concerned for half of the items and 1=very unlikely to 6=very likely’ for the other half of the items. A Cronbach alpha of 0.89 was obtained for this study.

Data Analysis

The relationship among the major variables was analyzed using multiple correlations analysis. Two hypotheses were further tested using multiple regression analysis and t-test of independent measures.

RESULTS

Results of the investigation conducted on influence of skin colour satisfaction (SCS), self-esteem (SE) and physical attractiveness (PA) on perceived peer rejection (PPR) among entry level undergraduates in University of Ibadan are presented.

Multiple Correlation Analysis

Table 1: Zero – Order Correlation Showing the Relationships among the Variables

Variables	Age	SCS	SE	PA	PPR
Age	1	-.012	.365**	.363**	-.258**
SCS		1	.114	.125*	-.659*
SE			1	.888**	-.871**
PA				1	-.786**
PPR					1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

SCS= Skin colour satisfaction **SE**=Self-esteem **PA**= Physical Attractiveness **PPR** = Perceived peer rejection

From Table 1, the results showed that age had significant negative and weak relationship with perceived peer rejection (PPR) among entry level undergraduates in university of Ibadan (r=-.26**) which implies that there is inverse relationship between age of individual and perceived peer rejection. Also, it was found that skin colour satisfaction had significant negative and strong relationship with perceived peer rejection among entry level undergraduates in university of Ibadan (r=-.66*), meaning that skin colour satisfaction increases with decrease in perceived peer rejection. In addition, table 4.1 results indicate that self-esteem had significant negative and strong relationship with perceived peer rejection among entry level undergraduates in university of Ibadan (r=-.87**). This implies that entry level undergraduates with low self-esteem are more likely

to experience high peer rejection among their counterparts. However, the results show that physical attractiveness had significant negative and strong relationship with perceived peer rejection among entry level undergraduates in university of Ibadan ($r=-.786^*$). In the same vein, perceived peer rejection increases with decrease in individual perceived physical attractiveness among fresh students in the university. Hence, the results confirmed the relationships among skin colour satisfaction (SCS), self-esteem (SE), physical attractiveness(PA) and perceived peer rejection (PPR) among entry level undergraduates in University of Ibadan.

Multiple Regression Analysis

It was hypothesized that age, skin colour satisfaction (SCS), self-esteem (SE) and physical attractiveness (PA) will jointly and independently predict perceived peer rejection (PPR) among entry level undergraduates in university of Ibadan. This hypothesis was tested using multiple regression analysis. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regressions Showing Joint and Independent Influence of Age, Skin Colour Satisfaction (SCS), Self-Esteem (SE) and Physical Attractiveness (PA) on Perceived Peer Rejection (PPR)

Predictors	R	R ²	F	P	β	t	p
Skin colour					-.158	-2.766	<.05
Self-esteem					-.251	-3.944	<.05
Attractiveness	.466	.217	13.818	<.05	-.042	-3.739	<.05
Age					.114	1.028	>.05

Table 2 shows that age, skin colour satisfaction (SCS), self-esteem (SE) and physical attractiveness (PA) jointly predicted perceived peer rejection(PPR) among entry level undergraduates in University of Ibadan [$R=.466$, $R^2= .217$, $F = 13.818$; $P<.01$]. This result implies that age, skin colour satisfaction (SCS), self-esteem (SE) and physical attractiveness (PA) jointly accounted for 21.7% variance in perceived peer rejection among entry level undergraduates while the remaining 78.3% could be attributed to other factors not considered in the research. Further results indicated that skin colour satisfaction ($\beta=-.158$; $t=-2.766$; $P<.05$) independently accounted for about 15.8% variance in perceived peer rejection, self-esteem ($\beta=-.251$; $t=-3.944$; $P<.05$) independently accounted for about 25.1% variance while physical attractiveness ($\beta=-.042$; $t=-3.739$; $P<.05$) independently accounted for about 4.2% variance in peer rejection among fresher's in the university . The results largely support the tested hypothesis and it is therefore accepted.

T-Test of Independent Measures

In the second hypothesis, it was stated that female entry level undergraduates will significantly report higher perceived peer rejection than their male counterpart and it was tested using t-tests for independent samples and the results are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 3: Summary of T-Tests Showing the Influence of Gender on Perceived Per Rejection

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t	P
Male	112	23.01	5.91	253	-3.149	<.05
Female	143	25.07	4.53			



Table 3 shows that gender had significant influence on perceived peer rejection among fresh students in the university of Ibadan $t(253) = -3.149, P < .05$. This implies that female students reported significantly higher perceived peer rejection than their male counterpart. The results confirmed the tested hypothesis and it is accepted.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study self-appraisal dimensions of skin colour satisfaction, self-esteem and physical attraction emerged as potent negative predictors of perceived peer rejection among entry level tertiary students. This finding implies that the more positive self-appraisals one has of oneself, the less likely it is that he/she will experience peer rejection. This finding is consistent with existing studies (Nesdale, & Lambert, 2007). Depending on the society within which one finds him/herself, there are ideal body images cherished by many and even though there may be individual differences. Observations and popular opinions in modern times points to the fact that beauty especially among females is defined partly by body structure and once the individual perceives either through remarks from people or by self-evaluation that his/her body appearance is defective and unsatisfactory as compared to that of others, it tends to affect their general feeling and psychological wellbeing (Wade, 2010). Some express this through the comments they make when they see others they consider to possess the ideal body features. It can however be noted that this perception may be merely based on belief. According to the Cognitive behavioral theory, experiences help individuals form beliefs. Beliefs they have about themselves, the people around them or the environment sometimes truly reflect people and the environment; other times these beliefs distort reality (Williamson, 1996). The way we deal with situations affects the outcome and then confirms or modifies the existing beliefs. Individuals are encouraged to reframe the distorted beliefs or modify behaviors to enlarge the positive outcomes, which leads to positive cognition and affect (Marini, Dane and Bosacki, 2005). Results which showed that female entry level undergraduates significantly reported higher perceived peer rejection than their male counterpart may be attributed to the highly emotional tenderness exhibited by the feminine gender. This finding conforms to results of Pelyhe's (2013) study in which female participants recorded higher sensitivity to peer rejection. Moreover, physical attractiveness has been found to be more pronounced among females than males due to the fashionable lifestyle of women in the society. There is therefore a higher tendency for significant disparities in physical attractiveness among females than males which may manifest in their sensitivity towards peer rejection.

CONCLUSION

Self-appraisals in any form are influenced by the cognition and the developmental processes of an individual (Bowker & Rubin, 2009). "The Ideal self" therefore is a concept an individual forms in relation to the cultural values of his/her society such that negative evaluations of the 'self' breeds negative social expectations and perceptions. Attempt at changing features and image such as skin bleaching and cosmetology surgeries is borne out of negative appraisals people make of their body image. Given the reality of the level of self and body image dissatisfaction and its subsequent psychological effects on individuals in today's society, changes must occur both on an individual and societal level to decrease the incongruent feeling not espoused by our culture in order to reduce self and body image disparagement. From a cultural viewpoint, weight-management and body image enhancement programs, and increased publicity of stereotypes encountered by individuals with certain types of bodies may eventually lead to sweeping changes in societal attitudes and practices.



Psychologists and other health and welfare professionals should emphasize life building skills (assertiveness, decision-making and group formation) during adolescence. These could be developed through various therapeutic approaches such as the Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) and the Transactional Analysis (TA). The adolescents need to deal with self-guilt and irrational thought which is possible through cognitive reconstruction. In order to achieve the various goals which target the health and mental wellbeing of the adolescent, it is imperative to talk about the best practice in body beautification. Students, parents and the school management should be educated about physical and psychological dangers inherent in altering natural body endowments and how to improve on one's self concept. School management should also look into the possibility of entrenching concepts of best practice in body beautification into school curriculum. Finally, non-governmental agencies may focus on the area of public awareness and inculcation of social skills (especially assertiveness and decision making) that will help to enhance positive self-concept.



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