

RELIGIOSITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AS CORRELATES OF BODY IMAGE DISTORTION AMONG OBAFEMI AWOLowo UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES, ILE-IFE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The research investigated religiosity and socio-economic background as correlates of body image distortion among Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates in Osun state, Nigeria. A total of 379 undergraduates (189 females and 190 males) were selected from the University for the study using stratified random sampling method. The research method used was descriptive survey method. Primary data was collected with the aid of questionnaires which had four sections. The data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. From the result, it was revealed that there was no significant relationship between religiosity and body image ($r = -.06, p > .05$); perception of body image was significantly and jointly predicted by socio-economic status ($F(3,374) = 15.15; p < .001$); there was no significant difference between male and female on their body image ($t(378) = 1.29; p > 0.05$); and age did not significantly predict body image perception ($\beta = .02; t = .38; p > 0.05$). The findings of the study will go a long way in helping various stakeholders and government agencies in establishing various educational programmes that can be used to change the attitudes of people positively in the way they perceived their body. However, it is important that more research should be conducted to confirm the reliability and validity of these findings. The study achieved the objective of examining the prevalence of body image as well as the influence of other variables on body image distortion. In conclusion, the study possesses the potential benefits to psychotherapist, counselors, psychologists and the general public.

Key words: Body Image, Socioeconomic Background, Gender, Religion, Undergraduates.

Introduction

Increase in overweight and obesity in children and adolescents in recent decades in Africa and industrialized countries have been observed. The related health risk factors, such as the overconsumption of food and a sedentary lifestyle, have received considerable attention. According to Thomas (2010), the predominant ideal weight and body image are thinness and obesity. While thinness conveys a sense of health and power, obesity is held to show a lack of care for health and appearance (Brown and Konner, 1987 as cited in Thomas 2010).

According to Cash & Szymanski (1995), body image is conceptualized as a “multifaceted psychological construct that includes subjective attitudinal and perceptual experiences about one’s body, particularly its appearance.” Body image concerns an individual’s perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about one’s body across dimensions of body size, attractiveness, and body-shape. The construct of body image is based on the self-discrepancy theory, a conceptualization that seeks to explain negative emotions experienced by individuals who hold two conflicting beliefs about themselves. One’s belief is based on how one actually sees him or herself, considered to be the “actual self,” and the other is based on attributes as judged by others considered to be the “ideal self.” When the two selves do not match, there is a discrepancy with the resultant effect of negative emotions or dissatisfaction (Malete, Motlhoiwa, Shaibu, Wrotniak, Maruapula, Jackson, & Compher, 2013). Previous studies on

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body image distortion indicated that certain variables had been previously associated with it. One of these variables of interest is Body Mass Index (BMI). Body mass index is a measure for human body shape based on an individual's weight and height. Body mass index is defined as the individual's body mass divided by the square of their height.

According to Yinger (1970), religion is a structure of practices and beliefs, which people use to solve problems in their lives. The term “religion” connotes a common belief system, a set of principles and practices, a code of conduct, and doctrine or dogma (Hill, Pargament, Hood, McCullough, Swyers, Larson, et al. 2000). Religiosity may be related to Body image distortion. Individuals that are highly religious tend to be satisfied with the way their bodies are; they tend to accept the fact the God created them the way they are, they are less worried about the shape and their general physical appearance. Consequently, non-religious individuals tend to spend a lot of time worrying about their body shape and general physical appearance, they tend not to accept the fact that God created them the way they are and this tends to affect negatively their day to day activities and overall self-esteem.

Previous studies (e.g. Holmqvist, Lunde, & Frisén, 2007; Thatcher & Rhea, 2003) reported more similarity in body image across different ethnic groups across the world. Recently, more studies have shown that differences exist in the perception of body image across different race and ethnic groups. For instance, in a study to explore the relationship between weight, race, gender and age on body image in children, Xanthopoulos, Borradaile, Hayes, Sherman, Vander Veur, Grundy, & Foster (2011) assessed 1212 children aged between 9 and 12 on eating disorder and other socio-demographic factors. The authors reported that ethnicity and gender predicted negative body image. Xanthopoulos, et al. (2011), further observed that body dissatisfaction was greatest in obese, Asian, and female children.

In another study by Kennedy, Templeton, Gandhi, & Gorzalka (2004), among 1471 Canadian university students, it was found that body satisfaction was lower for females across all ethnic groups as indicated in the desire of all the females to be thinner. They also found an ethnic difference in body satisfaction; the lowest levels of body satisfaction were found in participants of Chinese descent, followed by participants of Indo-Asian descent, and finally participants of European descent. Similarly, Breitkopf, Littleton, & Berenson (2007) observed that while nearly all normal weight African Americans characterized their weight as normal, over 30% of normal weight European Americans and Latinas characterized themselves as being over-weight.

Generally, female have been repeatedly reported to have a lower body image satisfaction than male across all age groups (Cooper & Fairburn, 1983; Furnham & Calnan 1998; Holmqvist, et.al. 2007; Kennedy, Templeton, Gandhi, & Gorzalka, 2004; Streigel-Moore & Franko, 2002). For instance, Wardle, Haase, & Steptoe, (2006), in their international survey to compare body image and weight control across different countries reported a significant gender difference in body image among 18512 university students in 22 different countries. It was reported that generally women perceived themselves to be overweight at all weight-levels unlike most men that even when over-weight it is unlikely to perceive themselves as over-weight.

Socioeconomic status or background is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation. Socioeconomic background may be related to body image distortion; an individual that is of a low socioeconomic status may have body image distortion than an individual from moderate or high socioeconomic status. Previous studies show that low socioeconomic status individual tend to have distortion of the body shape than their high socioeconomic relatives (Malete, Motlhoiwa, Shaibu, Wrotniak, Maruapula, Jackson, & Compber, 2013). Children with low socioeconomic status were reported to be more likely overweight, to perceive themselves as too thin, to be trying to gain weight, and less likely to receive dietary advice. Girls from the middle to upper socioeconomic status that are overweight were reported to have the lowest body image. However, boys of low socioeconomic status tend to have the highest body image (O'Dea, & Caputi, 2001)

The essence of this study therefore was to examine the interaction of religiosity and socioeconomic background as correlates of body image distortion especially among adolescents in Nigeria. Most of the studies are western oriented in which findings cannot be generalised to this part of the world; to fill this gap in literature this study improved on the previous study by further looking at body image from the perspective of socioeconomic background and religiosity.

Attempts were also made to answer the following questions:

- i. Is there any relationship between religiosity and body image distortion among Obafemi Awolowo University Undergraduates in Ile-Ife.?
- ii. Will socioeconomic status correlates with body image distortion among Obafemi Awolowo University Undergraduates in Ile-Ife.?
- iii. What is the role of gender on body image distortion among Obafemi Awolowo University Undergraduates in Ile-Ife.?
- iv. Will age have any significant influence on body image distortion?

Methodology

Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was used in this study. This design enabled information to be obtained from a representative sample of the population to describe situations as they exist (Sax, 1968). This was a correlational study; therefore, no variable was manipulated. The independent variables were religiosity, gender and socioeconomic background. Body image distortion was the dependent variable.

Study Population

The study population consisted of the undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Osun-State, Nigeria. The university is located in the South-West zone of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The university consists of thirty-five thousand

undergraduates ([www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obafemi Awolowo University](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obafemi_Awolowo_University), 2014) and has thirteen Faculties. The researchers used the table of Krejcie and Morgan, (1970) to determine the sample size which was found to be three hundred and seventy nine (379).

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample of the study consisted of three hundred and seventy nine (379) undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State comprising of 211 (55.8%) male and 167 (44.2%) female. In order to ensure a fair representation of the population, stratified random sampling method was used by which the researchers drew the sample from the following groups: religious affiliation, geographical location, and ethnicity; after which a random sampling was used to select respondents from each of the groups. The participants were drawn from six undergraduate halls of residence namely; Awolowo Hall, Mozambique Hall, Fajuyi Hall, ETF Hall, Moremi Hall and Akintola Hall.

Approximately 63 questionnaires were distributed to each halls of residence thereby making a total of three hundred and seventy-nine questionnaires.

Research Instrument

Data collection in this study was through the aid of a carefully designed valid questionnaire made up of 4 sections. The questionnaire was divided into four sections.

Section A comprised socio-demographic data such as sex, halls of residence, age, etc. Section B focused on religiosity, specifically items in this section measured the level of respondent's religiosity, and the aim was to assess respondent's level of religious commitment and belief. Section C of the questionnaire was made up of socioeconomic background information; specifically, items in this section measured the level of respondent's socioeconomic status. The items in Section D focused on body image distortion designed to measure the respondent's perception of their body image.

Section A: Socio-Demographic Data

This section comprised six items designed to seek information about participant's gender, age, marital status, religion, ethnicity and department. However, it was necessary to request data on these variables in order to have a better understanding on how they influenced body image distortion. In this section halls of residence were not categorized into different levels, participants were to write their halls of residence into the space provided in this section, marital status had three levels: single, married and divorced. Religious background of respondents had three levels: Islam and Christianity, traditional. Ethnicity also had three levels; Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba.

Section B: Religiosity Scale

The items of this scale were designed to measure the level of religiosity of the respondents. A 21-item Religious Affiliation Scale developed by Omoluabi (1995) was used in this study.

The scale had a response format of “Yes” or “No”. The author reported a test-retest reliability coefficient of .97 in an interval of three weeks.

Section C: Socioeconomic Background Scale

This section sought information on respondents’ general level of income. The scale was self-designed containing eight items on socioeconomic background data. It was designed in an open-ended response format. The scale was face validated by experts in the field of psychology in the Department of Psychology, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

Section D: Body Image Scale

This section contained statements that sought information on individual’s perception of their body image, it includes 15 items. The instrument is a standardized questionnaire developed by Rosen Jones, Ramirez and Waxman (1996). The scale was originally designed to measure concern about body weight and shape. The response format is also 1-6 point likert-scale ranging from Never=1, Rarely=2, Sometimes=3, Often=4, Very Often=5, Always=6.

Administration of the Instrument

The questionnaires were administered to the respondents in their various halls of residence. The questionnaires which took about 20 minutes to complete were retrieved from the respondents after responding to the items. The respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and the questionnaires were made anonymous.

Treatment of Data

The data collected were subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were presented with simple percentages. Hypothesis one was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, hypothesis two was analyzed using Regression analysis; hypothesis three was analyzed using an independent sample t-test, while the fourth hypothesis was analyzed using Regression analysis. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Summary of Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Levels</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Sex	Male	211	55.8
	Female	167	44.2
	Total	378	100
Religion	Christianity	194	51.3
	Islam	138	36.5
	Other	46	12.2
	Total	378	100

Level	100	89	23.5
	200	90	23.8
	300	87	23.0
	400	112	29.6
	Total	378	100
Ethnicity	Yoruba	167	44.2
	Igbo	132	34.9
	Hausa	79	20.9
	Total	378	100

Table 1 above shows that the male respondents were 211 (55.8%) of the total respondents while the female respondents were 167 (44.2%). The table also indicated that 194 (51.3%) of the total respondents are affiliated with Christianity religion, 138(36.5%) respondents practiced Islamic religion while 46 (12.2%) respondents were affiliated with other religion. It was also observed from the table that 89 (23.5%) of the total respondents were in 100 level, 90 (23.8%) were in 200 level, 87 (23.0%) were in 300 level, while the remaining 112 (29.6%) were in 400 level. Finally it was also observed from the table that 167 (44.2%) of the total respondents are of the Yoruba tribe; 132 (34.9%) respondents are from the Igbo tribe and 79 (20.9%) are Hausas.

Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents on religiosity

S/N	ITEMS	TRUE	FALSE
1	I believe in a supreme God/ Allah	351 (92.9%)	27 (7.1%)
2	I am born- again Christian/Muslim	235 (62.2%)	143 (37.8%)
3	I go to Church/Mosque always	234 (61.9%)	144 (38.1%)
4	I am a members of some Christian/Muslim societies	203 (53.7%)	175 (46.3%)
5	I pay my levies/dues/tithes in the Church/Mosque regularly	208 (55.0%)	170 (45.0%)
6	I regularly attend Bible/Koranic classes during the week	182 (48.1%)	196 (51.9%)
7	I take part in evangelical activities often to place outside the town I live	172 (45.5%)	206 (54.5%)
8	I regularly go out with colleague to preach from house to house	146 (38.6%)	232 (61.4%)
9	I regularly attend fellowship/prayer meetings	173 (45.8%)	205 (54.2%)
10	I listen regularly to Christian/Muslim programmes on Radio	156 (41.3%)	222 (58.7%)
11	I listen regularly to Christians/Muslim programme on Television	174 (46.0%)	204 (54.0%)
12	I usually attend night services in my church/mosque	171 (45.2%)	207 (54.8%)
13	I usually take part in fasting	185 (48.9%)	193 (51.1%)
14	I pray at least two time a day	224 (59.3%)	154 (40.7%)

15	I read the Bibles/Koranic at least ones every day	207 (54.8%)	171 (45.2%)
16	I regularly give arms to the poor	199 (52.6%)	179 (47.4%)
17	I have a miracle handkerchief/tira	102 (27.0%)	276 (73.0%)
18	I am baptized/confirmed/consecrated member of my religion	196 (51.9%)	182 (48.1%)
19	I always dress in the manner proscribed by my religion	196 (51.9%)	182 (48.1%)
20	I faithfully do what is expected of me during my religious festivals	235 (62.2%)	143 (37.8%)
21	I cannot marry a person who is not a member of my religion denomination	118 (31.2%)	260 (68.8%)

From the Table 2 above, 351 (92.9%) of the total respondents reveals that they believed in a supreme God /Allah while only 27 (7.1%) reported otherwise; 235 (62.2%) also reported that they are born- again Christian/Muslim, however 143 (38.1%) did not agree to this. Also 234 (61.9%) of total respondents agree that they always go to church/mosques, 144 (38.1%) reported that they never went to mosque/church. Furthermore, it was also observed from the table that 203 (53.7%) agreed that they are member of some Christian/Muslim society while 175 (46.3%) of the total respondents disagreed with this. It was observed from the table that 172 (45.5%) of the total respondents shows that they take part in evangelical activities, while more than half of the total respondents 296 (54.5%) said otherwise (they do not participate in evangelical activities). Also 173 (45.8%) reported that they regularly attend fellowship/prayer meeting while 205 (54.2%) said otherwise; 174 (46.0%) also agreed that they listen regularly to Christians/Muslim programme on television.

It was further observed from the table that 171 (45.2%) of total respondents showed that they usually attend night service in their church/mosque, 207 (54.8%) however did not. The table also indicated that 207 (54.8%) of the total respondents regularly read the Bible/Quran at least once every day while 171 (45.2%) said otherwise. 199 (52.6%) also reported that they give alms regularly to the poor and 179 (47.4) reported otherwise. 196 (51.9%) reported that they always dressed in the manner prescribed by their religion but 182 (48.1%) said they did not follow their religious dress code. Finally 118 (31.2%) of total respondents argued that they could marry a person who was not a member of their religious group. From this summary it was observed that respondents in this study report had average participation in religious activities; while some were highly religious, some showed average or moderate participation.

Table 3: Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents on Body Image Distortion

S/N	Items	N	R	S	Of	A
1	Have you been so worried about your shape that you have been feeling you ought to diet?	142 (37.6%)	96 (25.4%)	51 (13.5%)	46 (12.2%)	43 (11.4%)
2	Have you thought that your thighs, hips or bottom are too large for the rest of you?	157 (41.5%)	87 (23.0%)	53 (14.0%)	46 (12.2%)	35 (9.3%)

3	Have you felt so bad about your shape that you have cried?	157 (41.5%)	81 (21.4%)	59 (15.6%)	46 (12.2%)	35 (9.3%)
4	Have you noticed the shape of other men/women and felt that your own shape compared unfavourably?	148 (39.2%)	96 (25.4%)	53 (14.0%)	46 (12.2%)	35 (9.3%)
5	Has thinking about your shape interfered with your ability to Concentrate?	163 (43.1%)	87 (23.0%)	47 (12.4%)	46 (12.2%)	35 (9.3%)
6	Have you not gone out to social occasions (e.g. parties) because you have felt bad about your shape?	163 (43.1%)	87 (23.0%)	53 (14.0%)	48 (12.7%)	27 (7.1%)
7	Are you feeling excessively large and rounded?	169 (44.7%)	81 (21.4%)	63 (16.7%)	30 (7.9%)	35 (9.3%)
8	Are you feeling ashamed of your body?	175 (46.3%)	81 (21.4%)	63 (16.7%)	24 (6.3%)	35 (9.3%)
9	Have you felt happiest about your shape when your stomach is empty?	160 (42.3%)	81 (21.4%)	63 (16.7%)	24 (6.3%)	50 (13.2%)
10	Are you thinking that you are in your present shape because you lack Self-control?	185 (48.9%)	81 (21.4%)	53 (14.0%)	24 (6.3%)	35 (9.3%)
11	Has seeing your reflection (e.g. in a mirror or shop window) made you feel bad about your shape?	169 (44.7%)	113 (29.9%)	37 (9.8%)	24 (6.3%)	35 (9.3%)
12	Do you avoid situations where people could see your body?	186 (49.2%)	106 (28.0%)	27 (7.1%)	24 (6.3%)	35 (9.3%)
13	People are lonely because they don't try to be friendly.	176 (46.6%)	90 (23.8%)	49 (13.0%)	27 (7.1%)	36 (9.5%)
14	Have you been particularly self-conscious about your shape when in the company of other people?	177 (46.8%)	110 (29.1%)	41 (10.8%)	15 (4.0%)	35 (9.3%)
15	Has worry about your shape made you feel you ought to exercise?	218 (57.7%)	69 (18.3%)	41 (10.8%)	23 (6.1%)	27 (7.1%)

From the Table above, 142 (37.6%) of the total respondents reported that they were never worried about their shape, 96 (25.4%) reported they rarely got worried about it, 51 (13.5%) reveals that sometimes they worried about their body shape which brings the urge to diet, 46 (12.2%) said they often have this feeling and 43 (11.4%) agreed that they always were worried about their body shape which brings about the thought to diet. Also the table showed that 157 (41.5%) of the total respondents argued that they never thought of their thigh, hips or bottom being too large for the rest of their body; 87 (23.0%) reported that they rarely had this thought, 53 (53.0%) agreed that sometimes they had the thought; while 35 (9.3%) of the total respondents argued that they always thought that their thighs, hips or bottom were too large for the rest of their body.

It was further shown that 163 (43.1%) of the respondents believed that thinking about their body shape had never interfered with their ability to concentrate; 87 (23.0%) reported that this thought rarely affected their concentration level; 47 (12.4%) reported that such thought sometimes affect their ability to concentrate and 35 (9.3%) shows that their concentration is always affected by their thought of their body shape. Also 175 (46.3%) reported that they never felt ashamed of their body, 81 (21.4%) said they rarely felt ashamed of their body, 63

(16.7%) reported that sometimes they felt ashamed of their body; while 35 (9.3%) reported that they always feel ashamed of their body.

The table also indicated that 177 (46.8%) reported that they had never been self-conscious about the shape of their body when in the company of others; 110 (29.1%) revealed that they rarely did this, 41 (10.8%) reported that sometimes it happened and 35 (9.3%) reported that they were always self-conscious about their body when in the midst of others. Finally 218 (57.7%) of the total respondents argued that worry about their body shape never made them think of doing exercise; 69 (18.3%) reported that it rarely happened, 41 (10.8%) said that it sometimes happened and 27 (7.1%) agreed that thinking about their body shape always brings to their mind the thought to exercise.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One

Hypothesis one which stated that there would be no significant relationship between religiosity and body image was tested with Pearson product moment correlation. The result obtained was presented in table 4.1

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between religiosity and body image among OAU Students

Variables	N	Mean	Std	R	P
1. Religiosity	378	10.76	8.34	-0.06	>.05
2. Body image	378	32.10	18.44		

Table 4 shows a negative but non-significant relationship between religiosity and body image ($r=-0.06$, $p>.05$). This implied that there was no significant relationship between religiosity and body image. The hypothesis stated was therefore confirmed.

Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two stated that socio-economic status would significantly predict body image distortion. The hypothesis was tested with regression analysis. This was presented in table 4.2.

Table 5: Relative contributions of socio-economic status to the prediction of body image of students

Predictor	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig	R	R ²	F	P
Financial status of parent	0.26	3.75	<.001				
Parents educational status	0.18	3.48	<.001	0.33	0.11	15.15	<0.001
Type of residence	-0.05	-0.65	>.05				

Result from table 5 showed that perception of body image distortion was significantly and jointly predicted by socio-economic status (Financial status of parent, Parent's educational status and Type of resident) [$F(3,374) = 15.15$; $p < 0.001$]. Jointly, socio-economic status

yielded a coefficient of multiple correlation (R) of 0.329 and multiple correlation square of 0.108 which showed that about 10.8% of the total variance of body image was accounted for by the linear combination of the three independent variables.

From the results also, only financial status of parent and Parent’s educational status made significant independent contribution to the prediction of body image. Financial status of parent ($\beta = 0.26$; $t = 3.75$; $p < 0.001$) and Parent’s educational status ($\beta = 0.18$; $t = 3.48$; $p < 0.001$) were significant; whereas Type of residence ($\beta = -0.05$; $t = -0.65$; $p > 0.05$) was not significant. Based on this, the hypothesis was partially confirmed.

Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis three which stated that there would be no significant gender difference on body image among students was tested using an independent sample t-test. The result was presented in table 6.

Table 6: Summary table of independent sample t-test showing the influence of gender on body image

Gender	N	Mean	Std	df	t-value	Sig
Male	211	33.18	18.68	378	1.29	>.05
Female	167	30.73	18.11			

Table 6: shows that there was no significant difference between male and female on their body image ($t(378) = 1.29$; $p > 0.05$). From the table, the male students scored ($\bar{X} = 33.18$) on body image, while the female students scored ($\bar{X} = 30.73$) with a mean difference of 2.45. Based on this result, the hypothesis was confirmed.

Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis four which stated that age would significantly predict body image perception was tested with regression analysis. This was presented in table 7.

Table 7: Relative contributions of age to the prediction of body image of students

Predictor	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig	R	R ²	F	P
Age	0.02	0.38	>.05	0.02	0.00	0.14	>.05

The result presented on table 4.4 revealed that age did not significantly predict body image perception ($\beta = .02$; $t = .38$; $p > 0.05$). Based on this, the hypothesis stated was not confirmed.

Discussion of Findings

The study examined religiosity and socioeconomic status as correlate of body image distortion among undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife.

Findings

Presentation of findings from the study in line with the research questions are presented below:

The first research question sought to explore if there would be any relationship between religiosity and body image.

Results show a negative but non-significant relationship between religiosity and body image.

The second research question sought to find if socio-economic status would significantly predict body image perception.

Results showed that perception of body image was significantly and jointly predicted by socio-economic status (Financial status of parent, parent's educational status and type of resident).

The third research question sought to find out if there would be no significant gender differences on body image among students and the result indicated that there was no significant difference between male and female on their body image.

The fourth research question sought to find if age would significantly predict body image perception and the results showed that age did not significantly predict body image perception.

From the first hypothesis, it was found that there was no significant relationship between religiosity and body image distortion. This finding suggests that the level of religiosity of undergraduates had no significant relationship with their body image. In other words, going to church/mosque and active participation in religious activities was not significantly associated with body image. In contrast to the present findings, Homan and Boyatzis (2009), found that there was a significant relationship between religiosity and body image distortion especially among the young adults. They postulated that religiosity brings a sense of satisfaction in the individual.

Hypothesis two of the study which stated socio-economic status would significantly predict body image perception was partially confirmed, indicating that socioeconomic status played a significant role in perception of body image. Previous studies showed that low socioeconomic status individuals tended to have more body shape distortion than their high socioeconomic relatives (Malete, Motlhoiwa, Shaibu, Wrotniak, Maruapula, Jackson, & Compher, 2013; O'Dea, & Caputi, 2001). Similarly, Thomas (2010), in his studies, reported that socioeconomic status of an individual tended to affect the way they perceived their physical appearance. He further noted that people from low socioeconomic background tended to have body image distortion and tended not to be satisfied with their physical appearance.

From the results of this study, it was also found that there was no gender difference on perception of body image of the sampled undergraduate students. The findings indicated that male and female respondents had a similar perception of their body. This contradicted the many previous findings which had shown that gender difference existed when it chole to perception of body image (e.g. Cooper & Fairburn, 1983; Furnham & Calnan, 1998; Holmqvist, et.al. 2007; Kennedy, Templeton, Gandhi, & Gorzalka, 2004; Streigel-Moore & Franko, 2002). Maggie, Lalonde and Bain, (2010), who in a longitudinal study assessed body image across time and age between men and women, also found that men placed greater significance on their physical appearance than women, even though women report body image dissatisfaction more often. Thomas (2010) also reported a gender difference in perception of body image especially during adolescence stage. Onde & Bain, (2010), also argued that throughout all stages of life, women have more body dissatisfaction than men.

Finally, from the test of the fourth hypothesis of the present study, age of participants was not a significant predictor of body image distortion.

Conclusion

From the findings presented in this study, it could be concluded that socio-demographics factors such as religiosity and socioeconomic status were very important in shaping individual body image perception. The findings of the study would go a long way in helping various stakeholders and government agencies in establishing various educational programmes that could be used to change the attitude of people positively in the way they perceived their bodies. This study has been able to contribute to the body of knowledge especially in Nigeria. However, it is very important that more research should be conducted to confirm the reliability and validity of these findings.

Limitations of the study

A major limitation of the study was the issue of time as well as its scope. Limited sample size and non-coverage of a large number of undergraduates in Nigeria posed a major limitation to the study. Lastly, this study was restricted only to undergraduates of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; hence it was important for further studies to be carried out in other universities. Therefore, the findings of the present study could not be taken as conclusive because of these limitations.

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