



## Cosmetic Use, Body Image and Psychological Health of Mothers: A Nigerian Study

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### Abstract

Research evidence indicates that use of cosmetics and perceived body image has contributes to mental health in diverse populations. Its impact has been given little research attention in Nigeria. The present study examined cosmetic use, body image and psychological health of mothers. Participants were 280 mothers drawn from a University Medical Centre in eastern Nigeria using a purposive sampling technique. Data was collected by means of self-report measures. Multiple regression results showed that cosmetic use positively predicted psychological well-being of total sample. Body image negatively predicted psychological well-being of total sample. In order to promote maternal mental health, cosmetic use and body image should be addressed by researchers and healthcare practitioners.

**Keywords:** Cosmetic Use; Body Image; Mothers; Psychological Health; Nigeria

### Introduction

Women wish to look good not only for their spouse but also for social acceptance and for their f psychological well-being [1,3]. Mothers pay much attention to their physical appearance [4,6]. The trajectories and the type of care on physical appearance differs and may bring about various psychological ill-health on them [7,9]. Research on psychological health of Nigeria mothers is emerging compared to other individuals studied within Nigerian context. Psychological health of mothers is important, It involves functioning well, having positive self-esteem and ability to cope with life stressors [10,13]. Thus, striving to maintain a positive psychological health and enhance physical outlook, mothers may engage in cosmetic use [1,3,22] and cosmetics may increase or worsen mothers psychological health. Cosmetics are substances

or products used to enhance the appearance or fragrances of the [4,7].

It has contributed to psychosocial ill health in other contexts such as low self esteem [1,30], skin infections and allergies. However, little is known about the psychological health contributions of cosmetic use in Nigerian mothers. Also, Knowledge of possible influence of body image on psychological health of Nigerian Women is very limited, as a concept, it is described as an internal and subjective perceptions, thoughts, feelings and behaviour about an individual's appearance [14].

There is direct body image effect on mental health [8,26] With evidence that individuals with negative body image have poorer mental health status compare to individuals with positive body

image [29]. As a rational for this study, more information on cosmetic use and body image effects and mental health association could potentially lead to carefully tailored and specific strategies to reduce cosmetic use and body image effects, which in turn, could effectively reduce distress associated with them and contribute to better quality of life for mothers. Also, the study seeks to replicate among Nigerian women extant findings on impacts of cosmetics use and body image on health as established in other populations. It will add to the maternal health literature and the findings may be relevant to practitioners in maternal health care. The specific objectives of this study are to examine whether: 1) Cosmetic use predicts mother's psychological health 2) Body Image predict mother's psychological health

## Method

### Participants and procedure

Participants were 280 mothers (Age range = 18– 32 years,  $mean = 21.46$  years) drawn from a university medical centre in eastern Nigeria, using a purposive sampling technique. Data was collected by means of questionnaires in the local dialect of mothers. Translation and back translation of the questionnaire from English to the local Igbo language was carried out by two expert translators. Semantic problems shown by the translation into Igbo were resolved through discussions between the experts, the researchers and 2 mothers who were native Igbo speakers with good knowledge of English. Following ethical approval by the Institutional Review Board of the Hospital, mothers were approached by researchers during ante natal clinics, and asked to participate in this study. The purpose and procedures of the study, the kinds of questions that would be asked, confidentiality of data, and participants' rights were explained to them. Mothers who gave informed consent were recruited for the study. Non-literate participants were assisted by the research assistants. It took approximately 11 min to answer the questionnaire. 18 participants whose data were missing for >25% of items within any of the scales were not included in the analysis, giving rise to a final sample of 280 mothers.

### Measures

Data was collected using three self-reported measures, namely, modified Cash Cosmetic Use Inventory (CCUI), Body image Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (BIAA-Q) and General Health

Questionnaire (GHQ-12). Participants provided data on their age by indicating them on the questionnaire. To assess cosmetic use we used 16-item CCUI (Cash and Cash, 1982). CCUI has been shown to be reliable, in terms of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .90$ ) and test retest reliability over two weeks (Kim and Jung, 2007) and has good validity with other measures of cosmetic use. To measure body image we used BIAA-Q (Sandoz, *et al.* 2009) BIAA-Q has shown to be reliable. It has internal consistency (.93) and construct validity coefficient of .89. In current study, a cronbach's alpha of .90 was obtained. To assess psychological health, we use the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1972; Goldberg and Williams, 1981) which has been found to be a useful screening tool for psychological health in Nigerian samples (e.g. Chukwuorji, Amazue and Eke 2016; Chukwuorji and Zacchaeus, 2014). It has a good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .70$ ) and a test retest reliability (.71). Total scores range from 1 to 48 and higher scores (of the respondent) on the 12 items) Indicate poorer psychological health.

### Results

Table 1. tests whether i) Cosmetic use predicts mothers psychological well-being. ii) Body image predicts mothers psychological well-being. (objective 1) cosmetic use positively predicted psychological well-being of mothers ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $t=2.10$ ,  $p < .05$ ). It implies that cosmetic use plays a significant role on psychological well-being of mothers. (Objective 2). Body image negatively predicted psychological well-being of mothers ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $t = 2.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Thus it indicates body image has significant main effect on psychological well-being of mothers. The result of the model summary as shown by  $R (.12)$ ,  $R^2 (.23)$  and  $AR^2 (.12)$  showed the strength of the relationship between the two independent variables; cosmetic use and body image on psychological well-being of mothers. The results indicate that 12% of the variation in psychological well-being of mothers was due to the contributory influence of cosmetic use and body image. Table 2. shows that psychological well-being significantly and positively correlate to cosmetic use ( $r = .18$ ,  $p > .01$ ). Result also indicate psychological well-being to be negatively correlate with body image ( $r = -.25$ ,  $p > .01$ ). Result further indicate psychological well-being to be positively correlate with age ( $r = .05$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Model	$\beta$	Standard error	Beta ( $\beta$ )	T	R	R <sup>2</sup>	AR <sup>2</sup>
Cosmetic use	.38	.06	.20	2.10*			
Body Image	.42	-.01	.20	-2.13*	12	.23	.12

**Table 1:** Multiple regression table showing the model summary Beta( $\beta$ ) coefficient and significant levels of cosmetic use and body image on psychological well-being.

Dependent variable: Psychological wellbeing note\* $p<.05$ .

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1 Marital status	-	-	-				
2 Age	21.46	2.49	.05*	-			
3 Cosmetic use	35.42	8.93	.03	-.00	-		
4 Body Image	19.38	16.77	-.03	.05	.55*	-	
5 Psychological health	7.09	7.33	.05	-.04	.18**	-.25**	-

**Table 2**

\*\*  $P<.01$  \* $p<.05$ .

## Discussion

Findings of the study indicated that cosmetic use was a positive predictor of psychological well-being for the total samples and it indicates that as mothers are using more cosmetics, they may experience more psychological well-being. This findings supports previous studies which reported that cosmetic use predicted mental well-being [23,28]. Mothers that uses cosmetics applies it to enhance their physical appearance that in turn being happy and satisfied with their appearance. They receive positive compliments from their friends and peers which help to reinforce them in using cosmetics thereby impacting positively on their psychological well being. The findings also indicated that body image was a negative predictor of psychological well-being of the total sample and it indicates that as mothers show more concern on body image, the lesser psychological well-being they will have. This findings supports previous studies which reported that body image negatively predicted mental well-being [19,27]. The environment (Urban Area) the participants were drawn from may have influence their perception of body image among the women. Within the environment there were media influences through advertisements and internets that promotes certain body image among women. This may have had significant influenced on perception of women

on their body image. In addition, the participants were drawn from neonatal mothers. These mothers gained body size as a result of pregnancy and regular food intake so as to meet up with the nutritional requirement of their babies. continual gain of body size and media perception of an ideal body image may have contributed to their psychological well-being. Effective programmes to improve psychological well-being on mothers, change their perception on cosmetic use and body image so that it have lesser mental health impact on them. This study has some limitations including cross-sectional design and limited sample number which demands caution in interpretation. Apart from age and marital status, other mothers characteristics (Education status) may influence the outcome of the study, such variables were not included as control variables due to the unavailability of such data and it is one of this study's weakness. Conclusion, despite these limitations, findings point to the study as a modest effort to highlight the relevance of recognizing body image and cosmetic use when designing and implementing intervention for Nigeria mothers.

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