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Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) Strategies for Addressing the Rising Influence of Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL) Culture among Nigerian Youths

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Abstract

This study investigates the proliferation of Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL) culture among Nigerian youths. It employs Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) as theoretical frameworks. The research identifies four primary drivers: social media-induced body dissatisfaction through curated imagery and upward comparison; relational pressures that frame BBL as essential for mate selection and social acceptance; career motives that position surgical enhancement as a strategic advantage in entertainment and modelling industries; and diaspora influence, which hybridises Western beauty ideals with local aesthetics, normalising BBL as both modern and culturally resonant. Using conceptual/theoretical frameworks and relying on secondary literature and case studies, the paper demonstrates how these drivers interact within a feedback loop of algorithmic amplification, normative reinforcement, and economic vulnerability, often obscuring health and financial risks. To counter this, BCC strategies are proposed at individual, public health, and cultural levels: personalised risk communication tools to foster informed decision-making; regulatory interventions to curb unregulated marketing and improve transparency; and narrative campaigns that reclaim indigenous conceptions of beauty to challenge surgical commodification. By rebalancing communication ecosystems and centring holistic well-being, this paper offers evidence-based pathways to mitigate risky BBL uptake while promoting body positivity and cultural integrity among Nigerian youth.

Keywords: Behaviour Change Communication, Body Image Dissatisfaction, Brazilian Butt Lift, Diaspora Influence, Nigerian Youth

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INTRODUCTION

A Brazilian butt lift (BBL) is a surgical procedure that combines liposuction to remove excess fat from areas like the abdomen, thighs, or flanks with fat transfer to the buttocks, thereby reshaping and enhancing their appearance (Cleveland Clinic, 2022). The Brazilian Butt Lift originated in Brazil and is most closely associated with the work of Dr. Ivo Pitanguy, a prominent Brazilian plastic surgeon who died in 2016. Although several surgeons had experimented with fat grafting to the buttocks earlier, Pitanguy is widely credited with developing the modern procedure. He had already published techniques related to correcting buttock sag in *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* in 1964, and his later research on aesthetic surgery of the gluteal region in 1971 and 1984 helped lay the groundwork for fat grafting to the buttocks (Rodriguez, 2022).

Early attempts at buttock augmentation in the late 1960s and 1970s relied on implants adopted from breast surgery, but these produced poor aesthetic and functional results. In subsequent decades, surgeons such as Jose Robles refined implant placement by positioning them between muscle layers, which reduced complications but remained technically difficult and uncommon. Fat grafting began to see wider use in the 1980s, though the procedure remained relatively rare until after 2000 (Rodriguez, 2022). In Nigeria, the term has undergone a semantic shift from a clinical descriptor used within medical discourse to a cultural signifier that now occupies a central position in youth identity formation, and social media performance. Between 2020 and 2025, the prominence of BBL culture intensified as mobile internet access expanded, visual platforms prioritised body-centric content, and Nigerian public figures increasingly disclosed their own procedures.

High-profile entertainers and influencers have publicly acknowledged undergoing body enhancement procedures, and the circulation of their content through fan pages, and lifestyle blogs has contributed to a feedback loop in which exposure normalises the procedure and normalisation generates further exposure. The market for body modification has consequently expanded beyond Lagos and Abuja's elite to include secondary cities and university campuses, facilitated by medical tourism and the proliferation of clinics that operate with limited regulatory oversight. In some documented cases, the aspiration has translated into significant health and financial risk, including the use of family property as collateral to secure funding for surgery. An example is the case of Nigerian socialite Elena Jessica, who died in March 2026, following complications from a second BBL procedure performed at Cynosure Aesthetic Plastic Surgery Hospital in Lagos, with family relatives accusing the hospital of negligence and lack of transparency (Omosola, 2026).

Jessica underwent liposuction and fat transfer to her hips, buttocks, and calves on 6th February, 2026. Within days she developed severe pain, high white blood cell counts, and low blood levels, requiring multiple transfusions and antibiotics. Despite a decompression surgery on 13th February, 2026 to remove excess fat, her condition deteriorated with swelling, inflammation, and signs of sepsis. Attempts to transfer her to Lagos University Teaching Hospital failed due to unavailable ICU beds, and she was moved between private facilities at high cost. The family paid 1.5 million Naira for one day in ICU at Emel Hospital in Festac, and then faced a 6 million Naira bill for intensive care and surgery at another hospital. To cover expenses, they sold personal belongings.

A second major surgery on 22nd February, 2026 removed infected fat, but Jessica remained in ICU with open wounds and ongoing treatment. Cynosure provided no follow-up or financial support and later requested an additional 4.5 million Naira for continued ICU care, which the

family could not meet (Omosola, 2026). Digital tools have lowered the barrier to both imagining and performing this aesthetics. Social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok contribute substantially to the spread of this trend by circulating highly edited images and before-and-after transformations that present idealised body standard in a persuasive way, through algorithmic recommendation systems. For individuals aged 15 to 35, who constitute the majority of Nigeria's active social media users, these platforms function as reference points for beauty and as mediums for social validation.

The rapid normalisation of surgical body modification among Nigerians presents a public health and social problem that extends beyond the domain of individual choice. Several media-reported evidences suggest that many youths pursue BBL procedures with incomplete understanding of the associated risks. Documented complications include fat embolism and death, injury to blood vessels and nerves, infection, bruising and swelling, poor wound healing, skin discolouration/changes in skin sensation, and fluid retention (Cleveland Clinic, 2022), as these risks are exacerbated when procedures are performed in unregulated environments by practitioners without formal training in plastic surgery. Nigeria currently lacks comprehensive legal frameworks governing cosmetic surgery practice, which creates a regulatory vacuum that allows unqualified operators to market services directly to young audiences on social media.

While the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) regulates cosmetic products and their labelling, its mandate does not extend to the oversight of surgical procedures, leaving a gap in patient protection and accountability. The financial burden associated with the pursuit of BBL culture is also significant relative to the average income of Nigerian youths. In Nigeria, the average cost of BBL surgeries range between 3,000 to 5,000 dollars (Grandville Medical and Laser, 2025), which is an estimated 4 million to 6 million Naira, a sum that often exceeds available resources and leads to the depletion of savings, the acquisition of loans, or use of family assets as collateral. Such financial decisions reflect not only individual risk-taking but also intergenerational strain and the reallocation of economic resources away from other life sectors like education, health and entrepreneurship.

This trend further reveals a broader shift in body image norms that undermines psychological well-being. Empirical research conducted at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka with 542 young adults aged 18 to 29 found that social media use was a significant positive predictor of body image dissatisfaction (Onyedikachi *et al*., 2024). This indicated that repeated exposure to curated and surgically altered bodies widens the gap between perceived reality and personal appearance. This dynamic contributes to decreased self-esteem, increased social comparison, and in some cases, symptoms consistent with body dysmorphic disorder, while low health literacy and the algorithmic amplification of idealised contents on social media platforms limit the visibility of alternative narratives.

However, Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) can offer a strategic response to these dynamics by addressing the attitudinal and normative factors that underlie decision-making. BCC is concerned with the systematic use of communication to promote positive health and social outcomes, and its application to BBL culture is justified on three (3) grounds. At the *Individual level*, communication interventions can correct knowledge gaps by introducing balanced accounts of risks, recovery requirements, and long-term maintenance, thereby supporting informed consent. At *Public health level*, preventive communication can reduce the burden of post-surgical complications on health facilities, where resources are already constrained. At the *Cultural level*, BCC can facilitate reflective dialogue on beauty, agency,

and identity, drawing on indigenous conceptions of the body to counter the adoption of imported ideals.

Sociological analyses of the phenomenon have linked the rise of BBL to value erosion, low self-esteem, and the influence of Western beauty standards, suggesting that communication strategies must engage with these deeper psychological drivers rather than focus solely on surface behaviour. Therefore, the primary objective of this paper is to analyse the drivers of BBL culture among Nigerian youths and to propose evidence-based BCC strategies that can reduce risky uptake while promoting informed decision-making and body positivity.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in *Behaviour Change Communication* (BCC) as the primary conceptual lens; with *the Theory of Reasoned Action* (TRA) serving as a subsidiary framework for explaining the cognitive and normative processes that translate exposure to BBL culture into behavioural intention. Together, these frameworks provide a macro-level account of the communication environment and a micro-level account of individual decision-making.

Behaviour Change Communication approaches health and social behaviour as shaped not only by individual knowledge but by the structure of information flows, the credibility of message sources, and the interaction between messages and the social context in which they are received. In the case of BBL culture, BCC draws attention to the asymmetry of communication on digital platforms. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X provide visual, affective and transformation-oriented content, creating media ecology in which influencer testimonials, before-and-after imagery, and lifestyle narratives circulate widely and repeatedly. Within this ecology, messages that emphasise beauty, status, and economic opportunity associated with surgical alteration dominate, while information on surgical risk, complication rates, and post-operative care remains sparse and fragmented. BCC therefore frames the problem as one of communicative imbalance, where the prevailing discourse constrains the range of considerations available to youth when evaluating BBL.

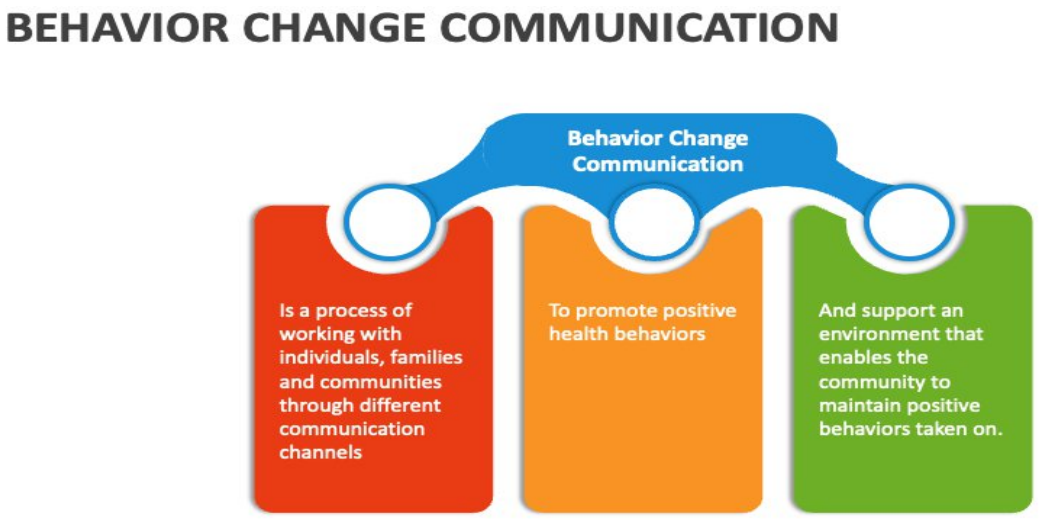

Figure 1: Behaviour Change Communication
Source: *Collidu. (2024, March 28). Behaviour Change Communication. Collidu.com. https://www.collidu.com/presentation-behavior-change-communication*

The *Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)* developed by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen in 1975 (https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-theories-of-reasoned-action-and-planned-behavior_fig3_264000974) complements this by specifying how exposure and discourse translate into intention. According to TRA, behavioural intention is a function of two constructs: *attitude toward the behaviour* and *subjective norm*. In the context, *Attitude* refers to the individual's evaluation of undergoing a BBL, shaped by beliefs about its outcomes, such as enhanced attractiveness, social recognition, or income potential. *Subjective norm* refers to performing the behaviour derived from the expectations of peers, influencers, and reference groups. In the Nigerian context, both constructs are amplified by the visibility of celebrities and peers who have undergone the procedure and by the normative framing of the altered body as a marker of modernity and success. This theory thus explains why youths may form positive intentions toward BBL even when personal knowledge of risk is limited: the *attitude* is shaped by perceived benefits, and the *subjective norm* signals that the behaviour is both accepted and expected.

The integration of BCC and TRA reveals the feedback loop sustaining BBL culture. BCC accounts for the structural production of a skewed information environment, while TRA explains how that environment shapes individual attitudes and normative perceptions, which in turn reinforce the demand for BBL and its continued circulation online. This integration also points to the leverage points for intervention. From a BCC standpoint, rebalancing the information environment requires the strategic introduction of risk communication, counter-narratives, and credible messengers who can disrupt the dominance of aesthetic and promotional content. From a TRA standpoint, intervention requires engaging with the attitudinal and normative beliefs that underpin intention, either by correcting misperceptions of risk and benefit or by amplifying dissenting voices that challenge the perceived consensus.

Drivers of BBL among Nigerian Youths

Social Media Exposure and Body Image Dissatisfaction

A study was conducted by Akintola (2024), assessing social media use as a predictor of Body Image and Self-Esteem among Undergraduates in Selected Universities in Osun State. The study states that social media platforms "have totally changed the definition of body ideals" by presenting "a distorted and often unattainable portrayal of the perfect body". Through curated posts, filtered images, and digital alterations, social media establishes beauty standards that are often physically impossible to achieve. A key mechanism identified is "upward social comparison", as users are bombarded with images of "idealised bodies", leading to an instinctive comparison where individuals feel their own bodies fall short. Based on a study by Jiotsa *et al*., (2021), social media acts as a significant driver of body dissatisfaction through specific behavioural and psychological mechanisms.

The study identifies the frequency of comparing one's physical appearance to people followed on social media as the primary driver for body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness. It is not merely the exposure to social media that causes distress, but the active comparison facilitated by these platforms. Regarding the quantitative impact, the study provides statistical evidence that as the frequency of comparison increases, so do the scores on the Eating Disorder Inventory (EDI) subscales for Body Dissatisfaction (EDI-BD) and Drive for Thinness (EDI-DT). In terms of Drive for Thinness, participants who "Always" compared themselves to others had an average EDI-DT score that was 8.4 points higher than those who "Never" compared themselves, while "Often" comparers scored 5.3 points higher.

In terms of Body Dissatisfaction, those who "Always" compared themselves had an average EDI-BD score 9.2 points higher than those "Never" did, while "Often" comparers scored 5.6 points higher. These results indicate a linear relationship; the more often a user engages in appearance-based comparisons, the more severe their body dissatisfaction and desire for thinness become. The study explains that body dissatisfaction arises from the discrepancy between a person's actual body and their internalised ideal body. Social media platforms like Instagram are saturated with edited and idealised images, which users internalise as the "standard", they experience a cognitive distortion where they overestimate the size of their own bodies and underestimate their worth. According to the study, this comparison leads to negative effects such as guilt, negative moods and negative behaviour regarding dieting and physical activity.

This emotional distress is a precursor to, and a maintainer of, body dissatisfaction. Another critical finding of this study is that social media drives body dissatisfaction regardless of the user's physical reality. Crucially, the study found that Body Mass Index (BMI) was not a confounding factor in the relationship between social media comparison and body dissatisfaction. This means that a user with a "normal" or "low" BMI is just as susceptible to body dissatisfaction driven by social media comparison as someone with a higher BMI. This reinforces the idea that the driver is psychological rather than physiological. In terms of demographics, the study highlights that social media is a primary driver among teenagers and young adults (ages 15-35); as this group displayed significantly higher social media usage (frequency and time spent) and significantly higher frequency of body comparison.

Based on these research findings from Akintola (2024) and Jiotsa *et al*., (2021), social media functions as a profoundly potent driver for Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL), operating through a complex interplay of psychological mechanisms, cultural shifts, and demographic realities amplified by the digital landscape. The Nigerian context, characterised by high social media penetration among its large youth population, intense cultural dynamism around beauty ideals, and increasing accessibility of cosmetic procedures, creates a fertile ground where the mechanisms identified in the studies manifest powerfully to fuel demand for BBLs.

The core driver identified *upward social comparison* as exceptionally potent within the Nigerian social media ecosystem. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat are saturated with Nigerian and International influencers, celebrities, and peers showcasing highly curated, filtered, or digitally altered images of bodies that embody an "ideal", often featuring pronounced curves, slim waists, and prominent buttocks, frequently achieved through BBLs or its visual equivalents. This constant stream of "perfect" bodies, presented as attainable and desirable, creates an internalised standard for Nigerian users. As the studies highlight, it is not mere passive exposure but the *frequency and act of comparison* that triggers distress. Nigerian youth, aged 15-35, who are the heaviest users of these platforms, find themselves in a relentless cycle of comparing their own bodies to these unrealistic digital representations.

This comparison is particularly acute in Nigeria where traditional beauty ideals might have emphasised different features (like lighter skin or specific facial features), but social media rapidly homogenises towards a globally circulated, often surgically enhanced, curvaceous ideal. The quantifiable impact observed in the EDI scores translates directly into the Nigerian context. The more frequently Nigerian young persons compare themselves to the idealised bodies online, the greater the perceived discrepancy between their actual body and the internalised "standard." This discrepancy fuels significant body dissatisfaction and a drive for

thinness though in the case of BBLs, the "drive" is specifically for *enhancement* in specific areas rather than overall thinness. The emotional distress described guilt, negative mood, preoccupation with diet and exercise and becomes a powerful motivator.

For many Nigerians experiencing this distress, BBL emerges as a seemingly direct solution: a tangible way to bridge the gap between the perceived reality and the digitally constructed ideal. The procedure is marketed as a pathway to confidence, acceptance, and social validation, directly addressing the negative emotions stemming from comparison. Crucially, the finding that BMI is not a confounding factor is highly relevant in Nigeria. It dismantles the misconception that only individuals considered "overweight" by medical standards seek BBLs. The research shows that individuals with "normal" or even low BMI are equally susceptible to body dissatisfaction driven by social media comparison. In Nigeria, this means that a young woman with a healthy BMI but lacking the specific curvaceous silhouette promoted online can feel just as inadequate and driven to seek BBL enhancement as someone with a higher BMI.

The driver is purely psychological, the internalised ideal and the resulting feeling of falling short, not any objective physical health indicator. This broadens the potential market for BBLs significantly within the Nigerian population. The demographic focus on teenagers and young adults (15-35) aligns perfectly with Nigeria's demographic profile, which has a very large youth bulge. This segment is not only the most active on social media but is also at a formative stage of identity development, making them particularly vulnerable to external validation and beauty standards. Social media is their primary social sphere, and acceptance within this digital community is paramount. The pressure to conform to the prevalent body ideal online is immense. Furthermore, this demographic often has greater exposure to global trends through social media, accelerating the adoption of Westernised beauty standards, including the prominence of the BBL silhouette.

The combination of high usage, high comparison frequency, and high vulnerability makes Nigerian youth the primary target demographic for the social media-driven BBL phenomenon. The cognitive distortion, described as overestimating one's own body size/shape and underestimating self-worth due to comparison, is amplified in the Nigerian context where the gap between the average body type and the digitally promoted ideal can be stark. The constant reinforcement of this ideal across feeds, stories, and reels makes it feel ubiquitous and achievable, making one's own body seem disproportionately inadequate. This distortion fuels the belief that surgical intervention is not just desirable but necessary to achieve social acceptance and self-worth.

Relationship and Mate Selection Motives

A study by Lazarescu and Vintila (2023) establishes that “social” reasons are one of the two main motivations for undergoing aesthetic interventions, alongside “interpersonal” reasons. The authors define these social reasons explicitly as “messages received from parents, friends and partners.” This indicates that the decision to undergo surgery is often driven by the individual’s perception of how they are viewed within their social network and romantic relationships. The study also identifies “narcissism” as a specific personality trait associated with favourable attitudes toward cosmetic surgery. According to the study, the motive for surgery in individuals with narcissistic traits is the belief that the procedure will make them more attractive.

This suggests that for narcissists, cosmetic surgery is a strategic tool to enhance their standing in the mating market. The goal is not merely self-improvement, but the acquisition of specific social and romantic benefits that come with meeting societal standards of beauty. The meta-analysis in the study found a statistically significant relationship between appearance-based rejection sensitivity and interest in cosmetic surgery. This trait is defined as the dispositional tendency to anxiously expect rejection based on one's physical appearance. The study discusses the "fear of having an unattractive physique" as a motivating factor. In the context of relationship and mate selection, this implies that individuals with *Appearance-Based Rejection Sensitivity (ABRS)* view cosmetic surgery as a preventive measure. They perceive that physical flaws increase the risk of being rejected by potential or current partners, and surgery is undertaken to mitigate this risk and secure social/relational acceptance.

The study references the *Tripartite Influence Model,* which identifies three main sources that transmit cultural beauty standards: mass media, parents and colleagues (peers/partners). The study notes that people with high levels of *agreeableness* "can be more easily influenced by those around them to take such a decision", suggesting that in a relationship context, a partner's opinion or subtle pressure could be a decisive factor in the choice to undergo surgery. While the meta-analysis found the link between *extraversion* and *surgery* to be statistically insignificant. It discovered that *extraverts* often rely on their "group of friends" and "can be influenced by friends in making such decisions". As social circles and dating pools often overlap, this social validation can act as proxy for mate selection feedback.

The findings of Lazarescu and Vintila (2023) resonate profoundly within the Nigerian context, particularly regarding the motivations for undergoing Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL) procedures driven by relationship and mate selection pressures. In Nigerian society, where physical attractiveness and perceived desirability are often deeply intertwined with social status, marriageability, and relational success, the study's core themes of social influence, narcissistic enhancement, fear of rejection, and external pressure become potent drivers for BBL aspirations. The "social reasons" identified in the study, "messages from parents, friends, and partners", manifest powerfully in Nigeria. Family units, especially parents and extended family, frequently exert significant influence on an individual's life choices, including marriage prospects.

Parents, consciously or unconsciously, may communicate explicit or subtle preferences for certain body types, associating curvaceousness with fertility, prosperity, and suitability for marriage. Friends, operating within tight-knit social circles, often set trends and create norms; a friend's successful BBL and the subsequent positive attention in the dating market can create immense social pressure and perceived necessity for peers to conform. Partners, whether current or potential, hold immense sway. A partner's expressed preference for a fuller figure or even the perception that such a figure is valued within the relationship or desired by the partner, can become a primary motivator. In a culture where relational harmony and partner satisfaction are paramount, aligning one's appearance with perceived partner desires is a significant incentive, directly reflecting the study's observation that "social reasons" encompass messages from the relational sphere.

The link between narcissism and the strategic use of BBL to enhance mating market standing is highly relevant in Nigeria's competitive social and dating landscape. BBL is often perceived not merely as self-improvement, but as a strategic investment in social capital. For individuals with narcissistic traits or strong ambitions for relational dominance and validation, achieving an idealised physique through BBL can be a calculated move to elevate

their perceived value in the "mating market." This aligns with the study's finding that narcissists view surgery as a tool to enhance attractiveness and secure specific social/romantic benefits, meeting societal standards that confer power and desirability. In Nigeria's social hierarchy where physical appearance can be a visible marker of success and desirability, BBL can become a means to gain an edge, attract higher-status partners, and solidify one's position within the social pecking order, driven by a belief that beauty translates directly to relational power.

The concept of Appearance-*Based Rejection Sensitivity (ABRS)* strikes a particularly resonant chord in the Nigerian context. The "fear of having an unattractive physique" is amplified by the intense cultural emphasis on physical attributes in mate selection. Nigerian individuals, particularly women, often navigate a landscape where body shape is a critical, if not overt, factor in romantic interest and marriage proposals. This creates a fertile ground for ABRS, leading to the perception that physical flaws, particularly a lack of the desired curvaceousness, significantly increase the risk of rejection by potential partners or even disapproval from family. BBL is then viewed not just as enhancement, but as a crucial preventive measure against social and relational exclusion. The surgery becomes a shield against the anxiety of being deemed unattractive or unmarriageable, a direct response to the deep-seated fear of rejection based on physical appearance that the study highlights as a key motivator.

The Tripartite Influence Model (media, parents, peers/partners) operates with formidable force in Nigeria, shaping beauty ideals that directly fuel BBL desires. Mass media, including Nollywood films, music videos, and pervasive social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok); constantly bombard Nigerians with images of idealised, often surgically enhanced, bodies. These images normalise and glorify specific physiques, creating aspirational standards that individuals feel compelled to meet. Parents, as primary transmitters of cultural values, may explicitly endorse or subtly reinforce these ideals, associating certain body types with beauty, success, and good marital prospects. Peers and partners form the third critical pillar; within friend groups and dating circles, the validation and desirability associated with a BBL physique create intense social proof.

The study's observation that highly agreeable individuals are more easily influenced by others is particularly pertinent in Nigeria's collectivist culture, where deference to social harmony and the opinions of significant others (including partners) can make a partner's expressed preference or subtle pressure a decisive factor. While the study found no significant link between extraversion and surgery interest, the Nigerian context suggests that extraverts, deeply embedded in social networks and dating pools, are highly susceptible to peer influence. Their reliance on their "group of friends" for social validation means that the approval and trends within their social circle, which often overlap significantly with their dating pool, become a powerful proxy for mate selection feedback. If friends are pursuing BBLs and finding relational success, the pressure to conform and seek the same validation through surgery becomes immense.

Therefore, in the Nigerian context, BBL procedures are frequently not isolated aesthetic choices but deeply embedded responses to complex relational and social pressures. They are driven by the potent combination of familial expectations, peer validation, partner preferences, and the pervasive influence of media-promoted beauty ideals. The desire to avoid the social and relational rejection associated with deviating from these ideals, coupled with the strategic pursuit of enhanced desirability and social standing within the competitive

Nigerian mating market, makes BBL a significant, though often risky, pathway to securing relational acceptance and perceived marital security, mirroring and amplifying the core motivations identified by Lazarescu and Vintila (2023).

Perceived Career and Professional Advantage

An article by Peterson (Writer & Wednesday, 2023), demonstrates how perceived career and professional advantage serves as a significant driver for undergoing plastic surgery among men. The article establishes a direct link between macro-economic environment and the increase in male plastic surgery. According to the text, "economic uncertainty and ever-evolving job markets" are driving men to find "innovative ways to stand out and get ahead of the competition". In this context, plastic surgery is viewed not merely as vanity, but as a mechanism for career resilience. Savetsky, cited by Peterson (Writer & Wednesday, 2023), factors such as a "competitive job market" contribute to the rising trend of men seeking cosmetic procedures to appear "younger and more vital". This implication of maintaining a youthful appearance is perceived as a strategic asset in retaining employment or advancing in a workforce where older employees may feel vulnerable to replacement.

In the Nigerian context, particularly within the high-stakes, visually driven environments of Lagos and Abuja, the concept of perceived career and professional advantage as a driver for cosmetic procedures like Brazilian Butt Lifts (BBLs) takes on a distinct and potent resonance. The competitive landscape of entertainment, nightlife, and modelling in these major cities creates a unique ecosystem where physical appearance is not merely a personal aesthetic choice but a critical professional asset, directly tied to economic survival and advancement. This mirrors Peterson's (Writer & Wednesday, 2023) observation about economic uncertainty driving strategic self-investment, but manifests uniquely in Nigeria's specific cultural and economic dynamics. The entertainment industry, encompassing Nollywood, Afrobeats music, and burgeoning digital content creation, thrives on visual appeal and marketability.

For aspiring actresses, musicians, or influencers, possessing a figure deemed conventionally attractive, often accentuated by a pronounced hourglass silhouette achieved through procedures like BBLs, is frequently perceived as a non-negotiable ticket to visibility and opportunity. Casting calls, music video selections, and brand collaborations often implicitly or explicitly favour specific body types, making a BBL feel less like vanity and more like essential professional development. In a field saturated with talent and where first impressions are paramount and often digital, a striking physical presence can be the differentiating factor that secures a role, a record deal, or a lucrative endorsement, directly translating perceived advantage into tangible career momentum. The "economic uncertainty" Peterson (Writer & Wednesday, 2023) highlights is palpable here; with limited formal pathways to success in the arts, investing in one's appearance becomes a calculated gamble for a foothold in a highly competitive industry.

Similarly, the vibrant nightlife scene in Lagos and Abuja centred around exclusive clubs, high-end events, and hospitality, operates on a currency of visual allure and social capital. Hostesses, dancers, and even patrons seeking to network or advance socially are often expected to conform to specific beauty standards. For individuals working in this sphere, a BBL can be viewed as a strategic enhancement of their professional toolkit, enabling them to command higher attention, secure better opportunities (like VIP hosting or lucrative event appearances), and project an image of success and desirability that opens doors. The pressure to maintain a youthful, vibrant, and sexually appealing appearance is intense, as the industry values novelty and aesthetic conformity.

In a climate where economic precarity is common, the perceived advantage of looking "curvaceous, confident, and camera-ready", can be seen as a direct investment in securing employment, tips, and social connections within this lucrative but fickle sector. The "innovative ways to stand out" Peterson (Writer & Wednesday, 2023) identifies, are vividly enacted here, where the body becomes a stage for professional advancement. Modelling, both high-fashion and commercial, in Lagos and Abuja further solidifies this dynamic. While international standards vary, the Nigerian market often showcases and celebrates specific body types, with a significant emphasis on curves and a fuller silhouette. Aspiring models, particularly those aiming for the lucrative commercial, swimsuit, or music video markets, may perceive a BBL as a necessary step to meet industry demands and increase their booking potential.

Agencies and clients frequently seek models that embody the idealised Nigerian beauty aesthetic, which prominently features an accentuated posterior. For many young Nigerians entering this field, the cost of a BBL is not merely an expense but a calculated business investment, akin to purchasing professional portfolio photos or training. The perceived advantage lies in aligning their physical form with the market's expectations, thereby enhancing their employability, command higher fees, and extending their viability in a career where youth and specific physical attributes are paramount. The vulnerability older employees feel, as noted by Savetsky (Writer & Wednesday, 2023), is amplified here, where the pressure to maintain a youthful, marketable figure is relentless to avoid being replaced by newer, often surgically enhanced, talent.

Therefore, in the crucible of Lagos and Abuja's entertainment, nightlife, and modelling industries, undergoing a BBL is frequently reframed through the lens of perceived career and professional advantage. It is understood not as an act of superficiality, but as a pragmatic response to a hyper-competitive, visually oriented economy where physical capital directly translates into social and economic capital. The economic uncertainty and evolving job markets Peterson (Writer & Wednesday, 2023) identifies, manifest in the precarious nature of these careers, making the strategic enhancement of one's appearance, particularly to conform to highly specific and demanding beauty standards, a powerful, albeit risky, mechanism for career resilience, visibility, and advancement in a landscape where standing out is synonymous with survival and success.

Diaspora Influence

According to a systematic literature review by Alotaibi (2021), moving to a Western culture can fundamentally shift a patient's motivation for plastic surgery from external validation to internal satisfaction. The study infers that cultural context dictates whether a patient seeks surgery to please others or themselves, by providing a contrasting example involving Japanese women: A Japanese living in Japan is described as being driven by "transformative surgery" to "enhance how others see her". This aligns with the "transformation" archetype found in Asian cultures, where surgery is pursued to improve social status or competitive edge (e.g., for marriage or employment). Conversely, a Japanese woman "living amid and acclimatised to western culture" is described as seeking surgery "more to enhance how she sees herself".

This distinction suggests that the diaspora experience facilitates a psychological shift from collective, socially-motivated beauty standards to individualistic, self-directed aesthetic goals. The study also cites a comparison of South Korean and Japanese women living in California (a diaspora setting). Despite residing in the same Western country, the two cohorts

retained significantly different aesthetic goals rooted in their native cultures: Korean women generally preferred a larger forehead, a more defined palpebral crease, longer nose, and fuller lips, while Japanese women preferred a more lateral peak of the eyebrow arch. This indicates that while the diaspora environment may influence the acceptance of the surgery, the specific aesthetic ideals are often culturally resilient and persist across geographic borders.

In the Nigerian context, the influence of the diaspora on the motivations for undergoing procedures like the Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL) reflects a nuanced interplay between cultural retention and adaptation, much like the patterns observed by Alotaibi (2021) among Japanese and Korean populations abroad. For many Nigerians living in Western countries, particularly in the United States or the United Kingdom, exposure to different beauty ideals and personal freedoms can reshape their relationship with cosmetic surgery. Initially, the decision to pursue a BBL may be influenced by external validation, aligning with globalised beauty standards popularised through media, social networks, and local communities within the diaspora. However, over time, as individuals become more acclimatised to Western individualistic values, their motivations may shift toward internal satisfaction, seeking surgery not just to meet societal expectations but to affirm their own identity and self-image.

This cultural shift is particularly evident among Nigerians who return to Nigeria after living abroad, or those who maintain strong ties with the diaspora while residing in Nigeria. For instance, a Nigerian woman who spends years in the U.S. might adopt Western ideals of body autonomy and self-expression, leading her to view a BBL as a personal choice rather than a collective obligation. Conversely, those in Nigeria who interact closely with diaspora communities, through social media, travel, or business, may be influenced by both global and local beauty standards. The BBL, in this case, becomes a hybrid of Western trends and Nigerian cultural preferences for fuller figures, which have long been associated with beauty, fertility, and prosperity.

Moreover, the persistence of culturally specific aesthetic ideals, as noted in Alotaibi's (2021) study, is also observable in the Nigerian diaspora. While Western beauty trends may influence the desire for a BBL, the particular execution or emphasis of the procedure often remains rooted in Nigerian cultural aesthetics. For example, the preference for a pronounced hourglass figure or a more voluptuous silhouette may be influenced by international celebrities and local Nigerian celebrities, models, and social media influencers. This blending of influences creates a unique aesthetic that is neither entirely Western nor purely traditional but a fusion of both, shaped by the diasporic experience. The diaspora also plays a role in normalising cosmetic surgery within Nigerian society.

As more Nigerians abroad undergo procedures like BBLs and share their experiences through social media or upon returning home, the perception of such surgeries shifts from being taboo to being a legitimate form of self-improvement. This normalisation can reduce the stigma associated with cosmetic surgery, encouraging more people in Nigeria to consider it as a viable option for enhancing their appearance and, by extension, their social and professional standing. In summary, the diaspora influence on BBL procedures in Nigeria highlights a dynamic cultural exchange where external validation and internal satisfaction coexist. While exposure to Western cultures may encourage a more individualistic approach to beauty, the enduring influence of Nigerian cultural ideals ensures that the motivations for undergoing surgery remain deeply tied to both personal and collective identity.

This fusion of global and local perspectives underscores the complexity of beauty standards in an increasingly interconnected world, where the diaspora serves as both a catalyst for change and a keeper of cultural continuity.

DISCUSSION

Integrating Empirical Drivers into Conceptual Frameworks

Social Media Exposure and Body Image Dissatisfaction

The studies by Akintola (2024) and Jiotsa *et al*., (2021) provide empirical grounding for this imbalance, revealing how social media fuels body dissatisfaction through upward social comparison and cognitive distortion. In the Nigerian context, this is not merely an individual psychological phenomenon but a structural one: platforms like Instagram and TikTok algorithmically amplify idealised bodies, creating a skewed information environment that BCC seeks to rebalance. From a Theory of Reasoned Action perspective, these social media exposures directly shape attitudes toward BBL, viewing it as a solution to distress, and subjective norms, perceiving the procedure as widely endorsed. Nigerian youth, particularly those aged 15–35, internalise these ideals as attainable, leading to positive behavioural intentions even when risk awareness is low.

The finding that BMI is irrelevant to dissatisfaction underscores that the driver is attitudinal, not physiological, aligning with TRA's focus on beliefs and evaluations. This feedback loop, where social media shapes attitudes and norms, which in turn generate demand for BBL content, exemplifies how BCC's macro-level analysis of information flows complements TRA's micro-level account of intention formation.

Relationship and Mate Selection Motives

Lazarescu and Vintila's (2023) study on social and interpersonal motives resonates deeply in Nigeria's collectivist culture, where subjective norms, particularly those from family, partners, and peers exert outsized influence. BCC must address normative factors to reduce risky uptake, and the Nigerian context illustrates this vividly. Parents, friends, and partners do not merely offer opinions; they transmit beauty ideals tied to marriageability and social status, framing BBL as a relational necessity. In TRA terms, these sources constitute the "subjective norm," making the behaviour seem both expected and rewarded. The study's identification of *appearance-based rejection sensitivity (ABRS)* is particularly salient: Nigerian youth may pursue BBL not just to enhance attractiveness but to pre-empt rejection, a preventive logic that TRA explains through the interplay of attitudes and perceived social pressure.

The Tripartite Influence Model further clarifies how media, parents, and peers jointly reinforce these norms, a dynamic BCC must disrupt by introducing dissenting voices or alternative narratives. For instance, BCC campaigns could highlight relationships where BBL status is irrelevant, thereby weakening the normative imperative.

Perceived Career and Professional Advantage

Peterson's (Writer & Wednesday, 2023) observation that economic uncertainty drives cosmetic surgery as a career resilience tool aligns with the emphasis on BCC's role in addressing structural drivers. In Nigeria, entertainment, nightlife, and modelling industries

create a hyper-visual economy where BBL is not just an aesthetic choice but a professional investment. This mirrors TRA's "attitude" construct, where individuals evaluate BBL as a means to secure employment or social capital. BCC's macro-level lens is critical here: communicative strategies must address the broader economic and cultural structures that frame BBL as a strategic advantage. For example, BCC could collaborate with industry stakeholders to redefine beauty standards or promote non-surgical pathways to success, thereby altering the cost-benefit analysis embedded in attitudes.

The case of Elena Jessica (Omosola, 2026) underscores the stakes: when BBL is framed as a career imperative, the perceived benefits may outweigh risk awareness, a cycle BCC must break by amplifying narratives of alternative success.

Diaspora Influence

Alotaibi's (2021) research on diaspora-induced shifts in motivation, from external to internal, provides a critical lens through which to examine the Nigerian BBL phenomenon. While diaspora influence may appear to foster a more "individualistic" framing of BBL as self-expression, this masks a deeper problem: the procedure is often adopted not as a genuine expression of autonomy but as a performative response to hybridised beauty pressures. In the Nigerian context, this hybridity is weaponised to legitimise BBL, positioning it as both a "modern" choice and a "cultural" continuation. However, this reframing is a dangerous illusion that obscures the physical, financial, and psychological risks of surgical body alteration.

BCC must confront this complexity head-on, not by accommodating BBL but by exposing how diaspora-driven narratives co-opt cultural symbols to normalise a harmful practice. For instance, framing BBL as a "continuation of traditional beauty ideals" is a misleading rhetorical strategy that ignores the historical context of indigenous body aesthetics. Traditional Nigerian conceptions of beauty, such as the celebration of natural curves, fertility, and vitality, emphasise holistic health and communal acceptance, not surgical enhancement. To equate these with BBL is to distort their meaning, reduce cultural pride to a justification for risky medical interventions. This approach risks reinforcing the very attitudes and norms that TRA identifies as drivers of intention, rather than challenging them.

The persistence of culturally specific aesthetics among diaspora groups, such as the lateral eyebrow peak among Japanese women, underscores the resilience of local identity, but it also highlights a critical distinction: these preferences are often rooted in non-surgical, culturally meaningful practices. In contrast, BBL in Nigeria is a hybrid of Western surgical trends and local beauty ideals, but one that prioritises physical transformation over cultural integrity. For BCC to engage with this hybrid identity without endorsing BBL, it must centre narratives that decouple cultural pride from surgical necessity. For example, campaigns could highlight how traditional dance, fashion, and body art celebrate curves without the need for invasive procedures, thereby realigning subjective norms with values that honour both individual and collective well-being.

Ultimately, BCC's role is not to legitimise BBL but to disrupt the feedback loop that perpetuates it. This means challenging the myth of "informed choice" in a context where algorithmic amplification, peer pressure, and economic precarity constrain true autonomy. By centring indigenous conceptions of beauty that reject surgical alteration as the price of modernity, BCC can offer a counter-narrative that affirms agency without normalising harm. The goal is not to dismiss hybrid identities but to reclaim them, showing that confidence and

cultural belonging do not require risking one's life or financial stability for an unattainable, surgically imposed ideal.

Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) Strategies

The following are a set of highly tailored Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) strategies at the Individual, Public Health, and Cultural levels, specifically designed to address the drivers of BBL culture among Nigerian youths. These strategies are deeply informed by the empirical drivers (social media influence, relationship/mate selection motives, career advantage, and diaspora influence) and the conceptual frameworks of BCC and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA).

Individual Level: Targeted Risk Communication and Empowerment

Personalised Risk Profiling Tools: Development of interactive digital tools (e.g., WhatsApp bots, Instagram quizzes) that allow users to input their lifestyle, career goals, and social pressures. The tool then generates a personalised risk-benefit analysis of BBL, including potential health complications, financial trade-offs (e.g., opportunity cost of 4–6 million Naira), and alternative non-surgical body confidence pathways. This counters the "attitude" component of TRA by reframing BBL as a high-stakes choice rather than an easy solution.

Peer-Led Testimonial Campaigns: Collaboration with former BBL seekers (including those who experienced complications or opted against surgery) to share unedited recovery stories, financial burdens, and emotional impacts. These testimonials should be distributed via TikTok, Instagram Reels, and university forums. By using credible "in-group" messengers, this strategy disrupts the subjective norm (TRA) that BBL is universally endorsed and risk-free.

Body Literacy Workshops: Implementation school and university-based workshops teaching "media literacy" for body image, including how to detect filters, edit cycles, and algorithmic bias. These should include practical sessions on curating social feeds to *reduce upward comparison* (directly addressing Jiotsa *et al*., (2021) findings). Participants would leave with a "balanced diet" of content plan to diversify beauty references.

Public Health Level: Systemic Risk Mitigation and Infrastructure Strengthening

Regulatory Sandboxing with NAFDAC: Advocacy for NAFDAC to establish a "cosmetic surgery sandbox", a temporary, controlled regulatory environment where clinics must disclose complication rates, surgeon credentials, and emergency protocols before marketing to youth. Public scorecards (e.g., "A–F" safety ratings) would be shared on social media and clinic websites. This directly counters the communicative imbalance identified in BCC by making risk information as visible as promotional content.

Hospital-Based BBL Compulsion Registries: Partnering with teaching hospitals (e.g., LUTH) to create a national registry of BBL complications. Data on fatalities, infections, and re-operations (modelled on Elena Jessica's case) would be visualised in public health campaigns (e.g., "1 in 20 BBLs lead to life-threatening complications in Nigeria"). This shifts the narrative from individual failure to systemic risk, aligning with BCC's preventive focus.

Subsidised Counselling and Support Services: Funding low-cost psychological counselling services for BBL aspirants, focusing on appearance anxiety, relationship pressures, and career insecurities. Hotlines and Chabot staffed by counsellors would address *ABRS (appearance-*

based rejection sensitivity) and provide cognitive behavioural techniques to counter perfectionism. This addresses the emotional drivers while offering non-surgical alternatives.

Cultural Level: Reclaiming Indigenous Beauty Norms and Hybrid Identities

Indigenous Beauty Reclamation Movements: Launching of campaigns celebrating traditional Nigerian body ideals (e.g., pre-colonial sculptures, regional dance forms, and fertility symbols) that promote natural curves without surgical enhancement. Collaborate with cultural institutions (e.g., National Museum) and influencers to position these as "authentic Nigerian beauty," countering the Westernised BBL standard. This leverages diaspora research (Alotaibi, 2021) to show that beauty ideals are not static but culturally resilient.

Diaspora Dialogues on Hybrid Identity: Engagement with Nigerian diaspora communities (e.g., in the US/UK) to co-create content that navigates the tension between global beauty trends and local identity. For example, a series of Instagram Live sessions with returnees could discuss how they rejected BBL pressure while embracing confidence through fashion, fitness, or skincare. This normalises "non-conformity" while respecting individual agency, aligning with TRA's subjective norm shift.

Community-Based "Body Sovereignty" Festivals: Organising annual festivals in Lagos/Abuja and other parts of the country, featuring art, music, and talks centred on body autonomy, featuring survivors of botched surgeries, plus-size models, and traditional body art practitioners. These events would challenge the notion that BBL is the only path to social acceptance, instead framing body diversity as a marker of cultural pride.

CONCLUSION

The rise of BBL culture among Nigerian youth reflects a complex interplay of social, psychological, economic, and cultural forces, amplified by digital ecosystems and globalised beauty ideals. Through the frameworks of Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), this paper illuminated how social media fuels body dissatisfaction, relational pressures normalise surgical enhancement as a pathway to acceptance, career motives frame it as a strategic necessity, and diaspora influences hybridise local and global beauty standards. These drivers operate within a reinforcing feedback loop that obscures health and financial risks, particularly in an environment with weak regulatory oversight and economic precarity.

To mitigate this, BCC strategies must be multi-pronged: at the individual level, empowering youth with risk literacy and alternative pathways to confidence; at the public health level, enforcing transparency and accountability in cosmetic surgery marketing; and at the cultural level, reclaiming indigenous conceptions of beauty that reject surgical commodification. By rebalancing communication ecosystems and centring holistic well-being, it is possible to disrupt harmful norms, promote informed decision-making, and foster a culture of body positivity and cultural integrity among Nigerian youth. The stakes are not merely individual but collective demanding a shift from normalisation to critical engagement, from risk to resilience.

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