



THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL COMPARISON ON INSTAGRAM WITH BODY IMAGE ESTABLISHMENT IN YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the impact of Social Media Comparison can influence body image formation among young adults, especially Instagram users. This study is a field research with a descriptive qualitative research design. The data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis technique used in this study is the interactive model approach by Miles & Huberman, which consists of three stages: reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of this study prove that social media comparison can influence and have a significant impact on individuals' views in forming body image and beauty standards as reflected in their thoughts. In terms of positive impacts, social media can serve as a platform for individuals to express themselves and obtain relevant and up-to-date information. However, social media use can also have negative impacts, one of which is social comparison, which can lead to various psychological health disorders such as stress, excessive anxiety, poor body image, feelings of inferiority, and an increased risk of depression, which can lead to other mental disorders that can endanger individual health.

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INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology has experienced rapid growth and development, with the advent of the internet greatly facilitating people's ability to communicate with each other and access information anywhere and at any time, eliminating problems related to time and distance. The internet has become an essential part of modern life, serving as a medium for communication, a source of information, and a form of entertainment. As a result, the demand for internet usage continues to rise. According to a report by datareportal.com in January 2023, there are approximately 212.9 million internet users in Indonesia, representing around 77% of the country's total population (We Are Social, 2023).

Digital technology has also undergone rapid development, particularly in the form of social media platforms that are extremely popular among nearly all segments of society. According to data Indonesia.id, there are around 191.4 million social media users in Indonesia. The number of social media users at the beginning of 2022 was reported to be equivalent to 68.9% of Indonesia's total population, meaning that more than half of the total population are active social media users (Mahdi, 2022). According to a report by We Are Social and Hootsuite in January 2023, Instagram is the most popular social media platform. It ranks second as the social media platform with the most significant number of users in Indonesia, at 86.5%. According to publication figures from Meta, the company that owns Instagram, there are around 89.15 million Instagram users or 32.3% of Indonesia's total population.

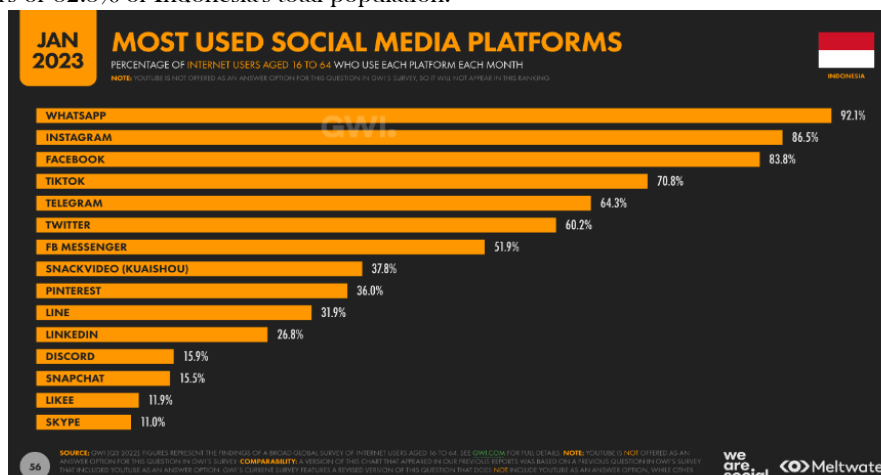


Figure 1. Social Media Measurement Diagram, We Are Social

(Source : We Are Social, 2023)

Instagram is a photo-based social media platform that offers various features, such as uploading photos or videos online that can be viewed by a wide audience, as well as sharing messages with other Instagram users. The Instagram app provides various features that enable users to interact with one another, such as the feed feature, where users can upload photos and videos with captions. Users also have access to Instagram Stories, allowing them to share short-form photos and videos that are only visible for 24 hours on their account. Additionally, there is the Reels feature, which enables users to upload longer videos of approximately 90 seconds in duration (Y. Dewi & Ningsih, 2023).

Users can also share and interact with other users' posts, such as liking or commenting on them. User accounts can also follow other user accounts and send direct messages or private messages to other Instagram users. These features offered by Instagram have attracted public attention and made the Instagram app popular among the public.

According to a report by We Are Social and Hootsuite in January 2023, Instagram ranks second as the most popular social media platform in Indonesia.

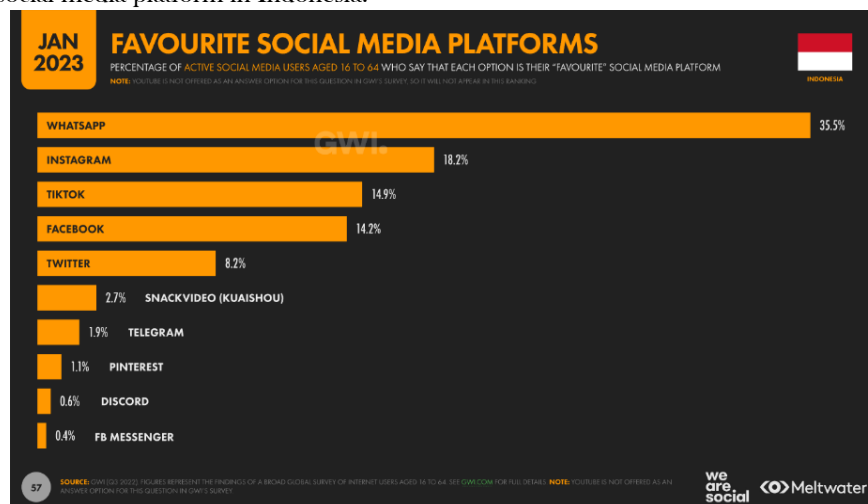


Figure 2. Social Media Measurement Diagram, We Are Social

(Source : We Are Social, 2023)

This is also supported by the results of a survey released by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kemenkominfo) in 2018, which stated that the second most popular social media platform among internet users was Instagram, with a total usage of 17.8%, which continued to increase until early 2023. The survey data also indicates that active social media users are predominantly teenagers and young adults aged 15–24, accounting for 92.1% of the total. The high usage of social media in society, particularly among teenagers and young adults, is due to social media being a platform that meets users' needs, such as accessing information, up-to-date news, and serving as a medium for entertainment and leisure (Syahreza & Tanjung, 2018).

However, the use of Instagram can also cause problems such as the formation of a negative view of oneself, or what is known as low self-esteem, which can affect the mental health of users and become one of the impacts of social comparison (Jones, 2024). The phenomenon of “Social Media Comparison” is a phenomenon of Social Comparison that occurs on social media and this phenomenon can be formed due to the high and intense use of social media, which has become inseparable from society (Husaini, 2023).

Social comparison is a process of comparing oneself to others in terms of abilities, opinions, or characteristics (Lestari & Murti, 2025). Basically, this happens because every individual has an urge to evaluate themselves and often does so by comparing themselves to others (Dewi & Ambarwati, 2024). Individuals will compare themselves with others who are considered less capable or less fortunate than themselves when they want to feel grateful and feel that they are sufficient or in a good state (downward social comparison), whereas individuals will compare themselves with others who are considered more capable or better than themselves, with the aim of motivating themselves and using those individuals as inspiration to develop themselves to become better (Aji & Muslikah, 2025).

Upward social comparison can have positive and negative effects on individuals. While it can serve as encouragement or motivation, upward social comparison at unreasonable levels can cause individuals to view themselves as inferior (feel inferior), which can lead to negative thoughts and emotions that affect an individual's self-confidence and, if continuous, can trigger depression.

The JED Foundation (jedfoundation.org) is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting mental health and preventing suicide among teenagers and young adults in the United States. Founded in 2000, the JED Foundation was established by a couple named Phil Satow and Donna Satow, who experienced a tragic event when their youngest son, “Jed,” took his own life in 1998. Following this tragedy, the couple realized that such cases were not isolated incidents but rather a recurring issue that led to tragic deaths among teenagers and young adults. Schools and universities at the time lacked the same efforts or services to prevent suicide among teenagers and young adults, and unfortunately, society was more focused on addressing the family's shame and the victim's identity rather than the most important aspect of the issue: a thorough discussion or analysis of the mental health issues faced by teenagers and young adults. Because of this, The JED Foundation was established to provide a safe place for teenagers and young adults who need a safe place and the support they need.

JED Foundation states that the negative side of social media comparison can have an impact on an individual's mental health due to the emergence of excessive anxiety when viewing content or posts from other individuals on social media who are considered better or more successful than oneself. This leads to negative thoughts that can affect an individual's mental health in many ways, such as an increased risk of depression, decreased self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, and poor body image or body dissatisfaction, which can trigger other mental disorders such as eating disorders that can be harmful to health. All age groups can be affected by Social Media Comparison, but teenagers (13-18 years old) and young adults (19-24 years old) are more vulnerable to the negative effects of Social Media Comparison.

In September 2021, the Wall Street Journal published the results of Facebook's data research, revealing that they had conducted research and found that Instagram had been proven to worsen individuals' views on body issues among teenagers and young adults. This occurs because Instagram contributes to social comparison, which leads to the formation of negative thoughts about one's body shape because it is considered “not ideal.” or body dissatisfaction. This can occur because, at its core, Instagram is a social media platform based on sharing images and videos. Sheldon et al (2019) noted that posts on the Instagram social media platform often feature images that explicitly communicate the concept of body appearance considered “ideal.”

Having an ideal body is everyone's dream, whether male or female. An ideal or proportional body is a representation where an individual has a balanced height and weight according to the Body Mass Index (BMI) calculation, which is a standard assessment based on the proportion of height and weight, thereby categorizing individuals into groups such as normal, underweight, overweight, and obese. However, in reality, many individuals, especially women, often do not use BMI calculations as a reference when perceiving their body shape, and the perception of an “ideal” body often does not align with reality.

Puspasari (2019) states that the appearance standards displayed in the media will influence individuals' perceptions of physical appearance. Someone who feels that they do not fit or meet an existing standard of appearance will experience dissatisfaction with their body image, which can lead to psychological disorders. Individuals will be constantly burdened by their obsession to conform or follow these standards of appearance by resorting to various methods, such as extreme dieting, excessive exercise, and even plastic surgery to enhance their appearance (Pedalino & Camerini, 2022).

The ideal body shape, especially for women, continues to evolve with the times. Several articles, such as liputan6.com titled "Changes in the Ideal Female Body Shape Over the Last 100 Years" and idntimes.com titled "Oh, So This Is How the Ideal Female Body Shape Has Changed Over Time," discuss the changing criteria for the ideal female body shape over the decades. This article explains the popular standards of ideal body shapes during those periods, such as the Gibson Girl figure in the 1910s, which became the beauty standard for women of that era. During this period, a small waist resembling an hourglass shape was highly sought after, leading women to use super-tight corsets to achieve this hourglass figure.

In the 1920s, the Flapper Girl became the trend or standard of beauty, characterized by slim breasts and hips, and a petite frame, embodying the ideal body shape of that era. In the 1930s, the Sex Siren idealized a soft, feminine body shape marked by curved lines, a slim waist, and a tall, slender figure. This body shape was considered more exciting and more appealing to the media at that time. In the 1940s, the Star Spangled Girl became a standard beauty trend of that era, marked by the popularity of "military shoulders" among women during World War II. At that time, women sought to appear stronger, with broader shoulders and a taller posture, wearing clothing that conveyed a sense of strength. In the 1950s, the Hourglass body type became the standard beauty trend of the era, characterized by an hourglass figure with large breasts and narrow hips and waist, which was the most popular sexual appeal of the time.

In the 1960s, the Twig body type emerged, with a drastically slim and petite figure becoming the ideal body standard of the time. In the 1970s, the Disco Diva body type, characterized by a slim figure and flat stomach, became the ideal body standard of the era. In the 1980s, the Super Model, with an athletic body, tall and slender, became the ideal body standard of that era. In the 1990s, the Waif, or heroin chic style, with a very slim body, angular bone structure, and pale skin, became the standard of beauty at that time. In the 2000s, the Buff Beauty trend featured a slightly muscular physique with toned abdominal muscles (abs), becoming the popular body shape of the time. In the 2010s, the Bootylicious trend featured an extreme hourglass figure with dramatic curves, a flat stomach, and a small waist, but large buttocks and breasts, making this body shape appear unrealistic if achieved naturally.

Ideal body trends continue to evolve alongside the development of media. In the 2020s, the "Social Media Age," women are no longer fixated on a single standard of body beauty and have moved away from the idea that women must be beautiful by conforming to a specific standard. Beauty from the inside out is a popular trend today, with numerous "Body Positivity" and "Body Neutrality" campaigns promoting self-love and self-confidence. However, the role of social media and influencers is significant in shaping individuals' perceptions of the ideal body shape. Each country has its own beauty standards. In Indonesia, a slim body and fair skin remain the most popular beauty standards to this day, despite the country's diverse population, which includes various races and ethnic groups, resulting in a wide range of facial features, body shapes, and skin tones. Unfortunately, many Indonesian women are still fixated on existing beauty standards.

The desire to have a certain body shape or to follow existing beauty standards is closely linked to the influence of media on individuals, which helps shape their perceptions of what constitutes an "ideal" body. On November 5, 2022, the website indosport.com posted an article titled "Body Goals to Aspire to! Check Out Pevita Pearce's Sporty Poses While Playing Tennis." In this article, Pevita was praised for having "body goals" and looking stunning while wearing a sports outfit during a tennis match. In April 2023, the website Eventori View also published an article stating that Pevita Pearce's body is the definition of "body goals" that Indonesian women aspire to. It can be said that Pevita Pearce's body shape is considered the standard for the concept of an "ideal" body in society.

The news above is one form of perception created in society regarding the concept of the "ideal" body shape, especially for beauty standards in Indonesia. This can certainly influence and shape individuals' thoughts about the concept of the "ideal" body shape, which can have psychological effects and lead to the formation of "body dissatisfaction" or "negative body image."

Body dissatisfaction, also known as negative body image, is a feeling, intense thoughts, and negative judgments about one's physical and functional body that are deemed "unideal," such as body shape, body size, muscles, and weight (Lestari & Murti, 2025). This idea grew because of differences in individual perceptions between the actual condition of individuals and the condition that is considered "ideal" by individuals, and this is also reinforced by social standards that have been formed in society. Simply put, body dissatisfaction is a deep negative assessment of oneself based on thoughts that emphasize physical appearance,

and this occurs because of a gap between the actual self and the “ideal” concept of beauty desired by the individual (Maimunah & Satwika, 2021).

Individuals with a negative body image or body dissatisfaction tend to believe that other people are more attractive, feel that their body shape or size is the cause of their failures, have feelings of low self-esteem and anxiety about their body shape, and always feel strange and uncomfortable with their own bodies (Dinata & Pratama, 2022). Individuals will tend to feel that they are being judged based on their appearance and focus more on things that are not important, such as appearance, weight, body size, and body shape (Anugrarisita & Manurung, 2024).

Body dissatisfaction, or an individual's dissatisfaction with their own body shape (after being exposed to images or videos on Instagram), can arise due to the formation of a concept of “ideal” body shape in the individual's mind, but the individual realizes that their body shape does not meet the criteria for the ideal body shape that has been formed in their mind (Husaini, 2023).

This happened on one of Indonesian artist Pevita Pearce's Instagram posts (@pevpearce).

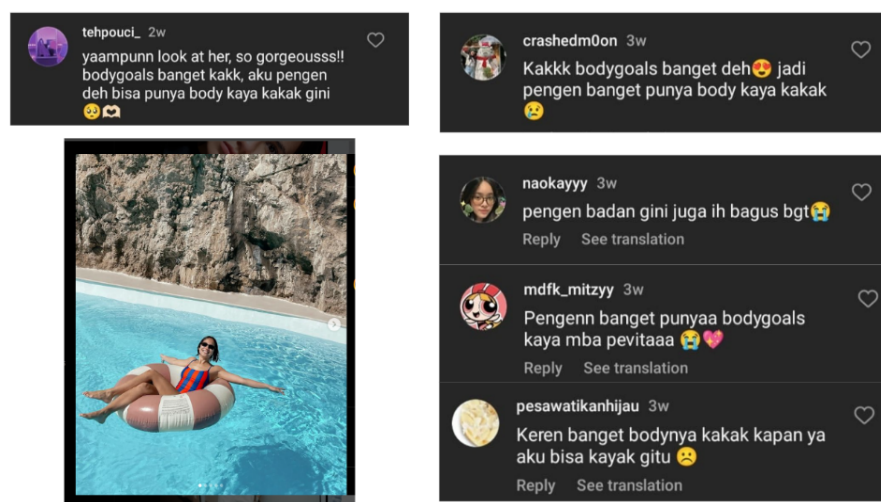


Figure 3. Posts and comments on Pevita Pearce's Instagram

(Source: Instagram @pevpearce)

In a post with the caption “memories of Amalifi,” Pevita appears relaxed while enjoying the pool, floating on a rubber ring. She is wearing a striped swimsuit in orange and dark blue that shows off her curves. In the next slide, Pevita is seen wearing an orange and white bodycon dress that also shows off her curves. At the time of writing this research, the post had received 277 comments, with various comments showing support, love, and encouragement. However, there were also some comments that fell into the category of social comparison. These comments show that they have compared their body shapes to Pevita Pearce's, which is considered an ideal body shape and an “idol” for women, and the comments left express a desire to have a body shape like Pevita Pearce's.

Initially, the trend of posting achievements on Instagram was a way to appreciate and express oneself and to gain public attention and opinions. However, the reasons for self-expression have begun to deviate and tend to be negative, turning into a platform for flexing or showing off one's status, social position, and wealth. The negative impact of social comparison can affect an individual's mental health, such as comparing one's body shape with others who are perceived to meet the “ideal” body standards. This can lead to excessive anxiety when seeing others' posts that are perceived as better than oneself, and can trigger negative thoughts that may lead to various mental illnesses, including depression. Unfortunately, social comparison is commonly found among all segments of society and across nearly all age groups. However, according to research, adolescents (13–18 years old) and young adults (19–24 years old) are considered more vulnerable to the negative effects of social comparison on social media, as they are the most active users of social media.

This phenomenon can certainly have both positive and negative impacts on individuals who consume or post such content intensely and continuously, such as low self-esteem and depression, or the emergence of impulsive behavior in individuals who are willing to do anything to achieve what they desire, even resorting to any means necessary without considering the long-term consequences. For example, creating a fake life on social media solely for the purpose of gaining recognition, followers, or simply likes from the public. Engaging

in extreme diets to the point of starving oneself just to achieve a body shape considered “ideal,” without considering the impact on physical health, or undergoing treatments and surgeries to alter one's body to align with the “ideal” beauty standards.

Based on the above background, the problem arises that teenagers and young adults are considered more vulnerable to the negative aspects of social media comparison upward. The hope is that features on Instagram will make it easier for individuals to communicate and interact with each other, as well as provide a platform for self-expression and sharing personal moments with the public. However, the reality is that there are negative aspects to social media use, namely the intense use of social media, especially Instagram, in society, which has become a platform for the formation of the phenomenon of “Social Media Comparison,” which can have a negative impact on the formation of an individual's body image, especially among teenagers and young adults who are considered more vulnerable to the negative aspects of Social Media Comparison.

Previous studies such as Dinata and Pratama (2022) and Pedalino and Camerini (2022) analyzed the quantitative relationship between the use of Instagram or social media in general and body image perception and body dissatisfaction, particularly among young women. Additionally, research by Cahya et al (2023) also revealed the negative impact of social media use on adolescents' psychological well-being, focusing on anxiety and depression related to exposure to cyberbullying and social comparison.

However, there is a lack of in-depth understanding of how the phenomenon of Social Media Comparison on the Instagram platform qualitatively shapes and influences individuals' perceptions of body image, particularly among young adults aged 19-24 years. Most previous studies have employed quantitative methods and focused on a broader population of young women (18–28 years old), with limited exploration of the psychological processes and subjectivity of individuals through in-depth interviews.

Therefore, this study addresses this gap by employing a qualitative approach through interviews to explore experiences, perceptions, and meanings of social comparison on Instagram in shaping body image perceptions among young adult Instagram users, while applying the Uses and Effects theoretical framework to understand the impact of social media use on personal and psychological aspects of individuals.

The objective of this study is to analyze the impact of “Social Media Comparison” on young adults who use Instagram in shaping their individual perceptions of “Body Image.”

RESEARCH METHOD

This research method is qualitative with a descriptive approach. Qualitative research is research with a natural approach to obtain definitions about something in a specific context (Moleong, 2018). Qualitative methods were chosen because they are capable of exploring respondents' subjective experiences, perceptions, and meanings in depth and contextually. The focus of this study on the psychological and social processes related to social comparison on social media requires an approach that captures the dynamics of interaction holistically. A descriptive design was used to describe the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives, thereby providing a rich picture of the impact of Instagram use on body image.

This study focuses on the impact of social media comparison on young adults who use Instagram in shaping their individual views on body image, based on three variables in the basic assumptions of media users regarding the uses and effects theory by Sven Windahl (1979), namely:

1. Amount of time, which refers to how much time an individual spends using social media.
2. Type of media content, which explains the type of media content that is used or consumed by individuals.
3. Relationship, which explains the relationship between individuals as users of social media and the media content as a whole.

In this study, informants will be determined using purposive sampling, which is a technique for selecting data sources with specific objectives and considerations. The data sources in this study are divided into two categories: primary and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained directly from the data source, also known as primary data (Sugiyono, 2019). Data will be collected directly by the author from informants related to the research topic through in-depth interviews and direct observation without going through other intermediaries. The criteria will be determined in advance to find informants who meet the criteria relevant to the problems in this study. Informants as subjects in this study were selected through several predetermined criteria, as follows:

1. Active female users of the Instagram social media platform
2. Belong to the young adult category, with an age range of 19–24 years
3. Leave comments on Pevita Pearce's Instagram account (@pevpearce) on one of Pevita Pearce's posts with the caption “memories of Amalifi”.
4. Comparing themselves or expressing a desire to have the same body shape after viewing the Instagram post.

Informants were selected based on criteria to ensure relevance to the research focus on social comparison and body image on Instagram. Active Instagram users aged 19–24 were selected because this group is vulnerable to the influence of social media in shaping body image. Selecting informants who interacted through comments on Pevita Pearce's posts regarding the desire to have a similar body shape indicates direct involvement in the social comparison phenomenon, thereby ensuring that the data obtained can accurately reflect authentic and in-depth experiences in line with the research objectives.

Secondary data is data collected by the researcher from existing sources, making it considered secondhand data (Sugiyono, 2019). In this study, the secondary data obtained by the author came from documents, journals, theses, supporting books, and the author's documentation. Secondary data is needed to support or supplement the primary data that the author has.

Data collection techniques can be carried out in various settings, sources, and methods (Sugiyono, 2019). In this study, the author used the following data collection steps:

1. Field research

Field research is a method of collecting data in which the author is directly involved in obtaining the data. The following are the methods used to collect data directly in the field:

- a. Observation: an activity that involves monitoring an object. In this study, the author observed active Instagram users who commented on Pevita Pearce's Instagram post with the caption “memories of Amalifi.” This was done to obtain the data needed to determine the impact of social comparison on the Instagram platform.
- b. Interviews: This technique involves asking questions to relevant parties or informants. Interviews were conducted either in person or online with parties whom the researcher believed could provide data and answers related to the research topic.
- c. Documentation: The researcher will collect data in the form of documents required for the study, including written materials, articles, policies, regulations, journals, reports, and images deemed important, such as photos.

This study employs the data analysis technique proposed by Miles & Huberman (1992: 20) using an interactive model.

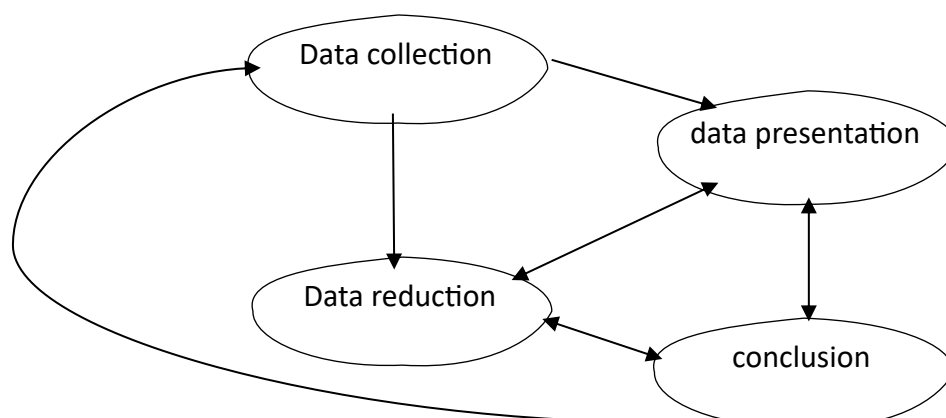


Figure 4. Interactive Data Analysis Model

(Source : Miles & Huberman (1992 : 20))

The author conducted data analysis using interactive analysis components, as follows:

1. Data collection

The first step was for the author to collect as much data as possible from various sources, such as interviews, observations, field observation reports, journals, and other materials.

2. Data reduction

This process involves summarizing, selecting key content, focusing on relevant information, identifying patterns and themes, and removing elements deemed unnecessary for drawing conclusions.

3. Data Presentation

The filtered and processed data is then presented in the form of descriptions, diagrams, and relationships between categories. The presentation of data must be in accordance with the research statement and provide a clear picture of the situation or problem being studied.

4. Drawing Conclusions

After the author collects and presents the data, the final step is to draw conclusions about the entire research results. Drawing conclusions involves using meaning, explanation, and argumentation to

compare data and explain the relationships between various components. From this process, conclusions are drawn to solve the research problems studied by the author.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Research Area Overview

Instagram comes from the word “insta” or “instant,” which was coined from the Polaroid camera known as “instant photo.” Instagram itself is a social media platform based on sharing images and short videos. Over time, Instagram has become one of the most popular social media applications with millions of users worldwide (Narotin & Satwika, 2024). Instagram has various features that support its users to create and share content, interact with other users, and build social networks. Instagram's features are considered innovative, especially after it was acquired by Facebook on April 9, 2012, for nearly \$1 billion. To date, Instagram continues to add features that pamper its users (Agianto et al., 2020).

Instagram has grown rapidly and has become a popular medium, especially among young adults. This is also supported by a survey released by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kemenkominfo), specifically in 2018, the data indicated that Instagram was the second most popular social media platform among internet users, with a total usage rate of 17.8%, which continued to rise until the beginning of 2023. The survey data also revealed that active social media users are predominantly teenagers and young adults aged 15–24, accounting for 92.1% of the total. The high usage of social media in society, particularly among teenagers and young adults, is due to the fact that social media serves as a platform to meet users' needs, such as accessing information, staying updated with news, and seeking entertainment and enjoyment (Syahreza & Tanjung, 2018).

Amount of Time

The amount of time is how much time an individual spends using Instagram. To find out how much time individuals spend using Instagram, the author interviewed informants who were selected using purposive sampling techniques in accordance with criteria established by the author. In the interviews with informants, the author began by asking whether individuals actively use Instagram, how much time they spend on Instagram in a day, and whether they have heard of or understand the phenomenon of social media comparison.

From these questions, it will be known how much time individuals spend on Instagram and the extent of their understanding of the phenomenon of social media comparison, which is the theme of this study. Based on the results of the interviews with the four informants, all informants said they actively use Instagram and, based on the time spent feature on the Instagram application, individuals spend an average of approximately 2-4 hours a day on Instagram. As stated by an informant named DRI (@mdfk_mitzzy):

“It depends on the time. If I'm not busy, I can spend around 4 hours, but if I'm busy, I just check it occasionally” (DRI, June 10, 2024).

The same thing was also conveyed by NDT (@tehpouci_), who stated the following:

“Based on the time spent feature, I spend an average of almost 2-3 hours playing Instagram per day, such as scrolling and looking at stories” (NDT, June 10, 2024)

The four informants in this study also explained their understanding of the phenomenon of social media comparison. The researchers found that none of the informants had ever heard of or knew about the phenomenon of social media comparison. As stated by NDT (@tehpouci_) and GSV (@crashedm0n):

“I'm not very familiar with it” (NDT, June 10, 2024)

“I've never heard of it before” (GSV, June 10, 2024)

Types of Media Content

Types of media content are the types of media or content used and consumed by individuals on Instagram.

To find out what types of media and content are frequently consumed by individuals, the author conducted interviews with informants who were selected using purposive sampling techniques in accordance with criteria established by the author. During the interviews with informants, the author began by asking about the types of content individuals typically consume on Instagram, as well as the types of content they prefer. The author also inquired whether individuals frequently view posts by celebrities on Instagram. Additionally, the researcher asked about the informants' understanding of the term “body image,” which is the focus of this study.

From these questions, it can be determined what types of media and content individuals consume, as well as helping the author to understand the informants' understanding of the term "body image." Based on the results of the interviews with the four informants, it was found that individuals consume different types of content or content that appears on their Instagram "For You Page" (FYP). The informants also have content that they like, such as content related to beauty, lifestyle, funny content, and updates about the lives or daily activities of celebrities, influencers, and idols. As stated by DRI (@mdfk_mitzzy) and ART (@naokayy):

"Usually beauty, like makeup recommendations, skincare, and the lifestyle of influencers, such as how they diet and exercise" (DRI, June 10, 2024)

"Random content like about K-POP artists or idols, movies, and the lifestyle of K-POP artists or Instagram celebrities" (ART, June 11, 2024)

All four informants stated that they frequently view posts by celebrities or influencers on Instagram, with only one of the four stating that they rarely view such posts on their Instagram. As stated by NDT (@tehpouci_):

"For Indonesian celebrities, I don't see their posts very often because I don't follow them much. But I do see posts from celebrities outside the country quite often" (NDT, June 10, 2024)

The four informants in this study also explained their understanding of the term "body image." All four informants stated that they had heard of and understood the term "body image," and on average, the informants heard this term through content they consumed on Instagram. As stated by GSV (@crashedm0on) and ART (@naokayy):

"I heard it from content that appeared on my reels" (GSV, June 10, 2024)

"Yes, from one of the posts on my Instagram FYP" (ART, June 11, 2024)

Relationship

The relationship is the relationship between the use of a media and individuals as media users who regularly consume content on Instagram. To determine the relationship between media use and individuals, the author conducted interviews with informants selected using purposive sampling techniques in accordance with the criteria established by the author. In the interviews with informants, the author began by asking individuals to describe the characteristics that fulfill the standards of beauty in society on social media today, followed by their views on their own body image.

The researcher also asked what individuals felt when they saw other individuals' posts on Instagram that had body shapes that met the beauty standards formed in society, whether individuals had ever compared their appearance with other individuals' posts on Instagram, and whether individuals wanted to make changes or had a desire to change their shape or appearance when they saw those posts. The author also asks whether individuals interact with the posts or content they see on social media, such as responding, reposting the content, or sharing their opinions about the content of the post.

From these questions, we can determine whether there is a relationship between the use of Instagram and the formation of an individual's body image. Based on the author's interviews with the four informants, it was found that the beauty standards depicted in the average individual's mind have similar characteristics, namely white skin, smooth facial skin, attractive facial features, and an ideal body (not overweight). As stated by GSV (@crashedm0on), NDT (@tehpouci_), and DRI (@mdfk_mitzzy):

"Fair skin, glowing face, and slim" (GSV, June 10, 2024)

"Currently, especially on social media. The beauty standard is fair-skinned, slim, and having absolutely good facial features (born beautiful/handsome)" (NDT, June 10, 2024)

"In my opinion, someone with a balanced weight and height, there are calculations for that. That's my opinion, but in terms of body shape, it shouldn't be too skinny or too big, and the face should have smooth and bright skin" (DRI, June 10, 2024)

All four informants also shared their views on individual body image, and on average, they felt that individuals did not meet existing beauty standards. One informant stated that they felt they did not have an ideal body. As stated by DRI (@mdfk_mitzzy):

"I feel my body isn't ideal (doesn't meet beauty standards) because I'm too skinny, my weight and height aren't balanced" (DRI, June 10, 2024)

The four informants also expressed their feelings when viewing other individuals' posts on Instagram. The researcher received varied responses, ranging from neutral, admiration, envy, to feeling insecure when viewing the posts. The following are the statements from the research informants:

"It's just normal, but it's indeed beautiful and pleasant to look at" (GSV, June 10, 2024)

"I feel amazed and wonder how someone can look so beautiful/handsome" (NDT, June 10, 2024)

"Honestly, I feel a little envious because I don't meet those standards" (ART, June 11, 2024)

"I feel insecure, I don't feel confident because I don't meet those beauty standards" (DRI, June 10, 2024)

The author also asked whether the informants had a desire to change or improve their body shape or appearance when they saw the posts, and the average response was that they did have a desire to change or improve their body shape or appearance. As expressed by NDT (@tehpouci_) and ART (@naokayy):

"Yes, social media posts can influence me to make changes to look better" (NDT, June 10, 2024)

"Definitely, I exercise more and try to go to the gym to improve my body shape" (ART, June 11, 2024)

The author also asked whether the informants interacted with the posts or content they saw on social media, such as responding, reposting, or giving their opinions on the content of the posts. The average response shows that individuals rarely interact with the content they see on social media. However, all informants said that they interact with the posts they see by clicking the like button and sometimes reposting the post on their Instagram stories, and only one of the four informants stated that they leave comments or opinions in the comment section of the post. As stated by ART (@naokayy):

"I sometimes like to comment, but most often I just like or repost" (ART, June 11, 2024)

Discussion

The Impact of Social Media Comparison on Young Adults Who Use Instagram

According to Djaelani and Akbar (2025), social comparison is a social phenomenon that occurs almost everywhere and in all circles of society, and people tend to continue doing it over time. Essentially, social comparison activities fulfill the need for information about one's social status, serve as a means to find ways to adapt to new situations, and can give individuals a better or worse feeling about themselves.

In the era of the 4.0 industrial revolution, which is marked by rapid developments in internet technology, the Internet of Things is a term used to describe an era in which communication technology continues to develop rapidly due to the presence of a large network called the internet (Rahmawati, 2023). Along with the development of the internet, digital technology has also continued to evolve, one of which is the creation of social media platforms such as Instagram. According to a report by We Are Social and Hootsuite in January 2023, Instagram is the second most popular application with the most users in Indonesia, with a percentage of 86.5% or reaching 32.3% of the total population of Indonesia (We Are Social, 2023). The use of Instagram has become a necessity for people from all walks of life. The use of any media will inevitably have various impacts on its users, one of which is the negative impact of social media use, namely the phenomenon of social media comparison (Almadelta & Mardianto, 2025).

JED Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting mental health and preventing suicide among teenagers and young adults in the United States, states that the negative side of social media comparison can impact an individual's mental health due to the emergence of excessive anxiety when viewing content or posts from others on social media who are perceived as better or more successful than oneself. This leads to negative thoughts that can affect an individual's mental health in various ways, such as an increased risk of depression and a decrease in self-confidence.

The results of this study indicate that social media use can influence and impact individuals' perceptions of body image. The participants also experienced the phenomenon of social media comparison, where they compared their appearance with others' posts that they perceived as meeting a beauty standard created on social media. The beauty standards formed in individuals' minds have also been influenced by the content or posts consumed by individuals on social media. The beauty standards formed in individuals' minds include a slim body, fair skin, a glowing face, small arms and thighs, a flat stomach, but large breasts and buttocks.

The Social Media Comparison phenomenon can lead to feelings of low self-esteem in individuals due to a lack of self-confidence, which can result in hatred toward one's physical appearance or body shape because individuals perceive themselves as not meeting the beauty standards formed in their minds, also

known as Poor Body Image (Sheldon et al., 2019). If these feelings persist, they can increase the likelihood of depression in individuals. The results of this study indicate that this phenomenon has influenced informants to desire to change their body shape so that they can fit in and be included among those who meet the beauty standards established on social media.

In the Social Media Comparison phenomenon, the use of social media is the primary factor in the formation of this phenomenon, which aligns with the Uses and Effects theory used in this study. The Uses and Effects theory emphasizes the effects produced after using and consuming specific media content. The characteristics of the media content consumed also determine the extent of the effects that occur simultaneously, referred to as “consequential effects,” which are the consequences and effects that arise.

This aligns with the application of the theory in the author's research, which aims to examine how the effects of using Instagram, from a psychological perspective (social media envy/Instagram envy), influence individuals' perceptions of their body image. According to (Almadelta & Mardianto, 2025), one of the factors influencing body image is the presence of an “ideal” image formed by the media, which is related to the negative experiences individuals feel.

Media plays a significant role in society, particularly in communicating concepts or standards of an “ideal” body to the public. Nearly all women and one-third of men have reported that models in magazines with slim and muscular bodies have become the strongest source of pressure for them to lose weight in order to achieve the body shape they see on magazine covers (Al-Aziz, 2020). Meanwhile, another study found that women with eating disorders or mental health issues like eating disorders tend to express a desire to have a body shape like the models they see in magazines. This becomes a strong trigger for the formation of body image ideals among women, leading to the emergence of mental disorders they experience (Puspasari, 2019).

Essentially, this theory explains the effects or influences caused by the use of a medium based on three fundamental assumptions: the amount of time spent, the type of content, and the relationship between the medium and the individual.

Intensity of Instagram Use Among Young Adults

The amount of time is how much time an individual spends using Instagram. The amount of time can also be interpreted as the intensity of an individual's use or consumption of Instagram. According to Horrigan in (Dinata & Pratama, 2022), there are two basic things that must be observed to determine the intensity of an individual's internet use, namely the frequency of internet use and the length of time an individual spends using the internet each time. There are two aspects that support usage intensity: duration and frequency of use.

In the research results with the four sources selected through purposive sampling, the author found that the average social media usage among individuals was 2-4 hours per day with an open-close pattern or inconsistent usage and a frequency that tended to repeat daily. According to cultivation theory, individuals who are exposed to a medium at a high level or are heavy viewers (more than 4 hours per day) tend to be influenced in their view of the world. Individuals will tend to see the same views as the content or substance of the media they consume in the mass media or, in this study, Instagram, and this may differ from reality.

On the other hand, individuals with lower levels of social media use or exposure (light users, spending 2 hours or less per day) are less likely to exhibit such tendencies compared to heavy users. The amount of time individuals spend using the Instagram app can be observed through one of its features, the “Time Spent” feature, which shows the average daily usage of the app, as follows:

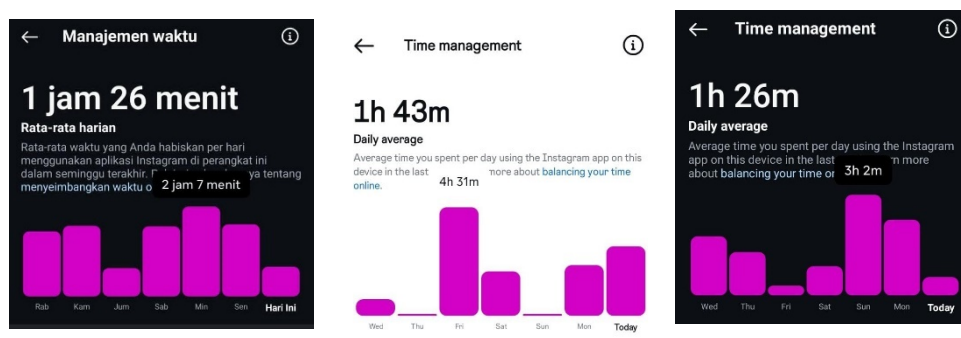


Figure 5. Graph of Instagram Social Media Usage by Informants
(Source : Instagram Informant)

From the data presented by the author, it can be seen that three of the four informants are heavy users who actively use Instagram with high intensity and frequency, averaging more than two hours per day. One of the four informants spends an average of two hours per day on Instagram.

The positive or negative impacts felt by young adults who use Instagram.

The type of media content is the type of media or content consumed by individuals on social media, especially Instagram. The use of Instagram in the modern technological era, as it is today, is certainly not only a means of communication but has become a lifestyle for modern society. Various types of content are available and uploaded on Instagram, such as information-based content, current news, lifestyle content, entertainment, and various other popular trends.

High-intensity use of social media can have significant impacts on both individuals and society as a whole (Kriyantono, 2018). The use of social media can have a positive impact on individuals, such as providing a platform for individuals to express themselves, a place to find and establish relationships with other individuals, and a source of information and current news. However, the use of social media can also have negative impacts on individuals, such as being influenced by fake news, developing social media addiction, and excessive use that can affect mental health.

Trends on social media, especially Instagram, often become factors in the formation of social phenomena in society. There are several phenomena that can have a negative impact on individuals, such as FoMO and social media comparison. FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) is a phenomenon that can make individuals willing to do anything just to keep up with the latest trends on social media. Then there is the phenomenon of Flexing, which refers to the excessive display of wealth, luxury items, and “expensive” activities that people do on social media.

The phenomenon of social media comparison is a social comparison phenomenon that occurs on social media. This phenomenon can arise due to the high intensity of social media use, which can have an impact on an individual's mental health, such as excessive anxiety, the formation of low self-esteem or poor body image, and can even increase the likelihood of depression, because individuals compare themselves to a “standard” that has been formed on social media. This phenomenon is one of the effects or impacts of intensive social media use, as consuming content on social media, whether consciously or unconsciously, can influence individuals.

From the results of the study with the four informants selected through purposive sampling, the author found that informants tend to consume or view different types of content. However, from the interview data obtained by the author, the average preference for content was lifestyle, such as sports tips, diets, and daily life content. There was also beauty content about fashion, makeup, and skincare. As well as content about updates on the lives of Indonesian and foreign influencers and artists, such as those from Korea and America.

From the data presented by the author, it can be seen that the four informants have similar average content preferences, which can influence individuals to follow what they consume on social media.

The relationship between the use of Instagram social media and the formation of body image and beauty standards in individuals' minds

The relationship in the basic assumption of this theory is the relationship between the use of a media and individuals as media users who regularly consume content on social media. This relationship includes the extent to which someone feels connected or identified with the media they use. If someone feels that the media they consume is relevant or in line with their personal preferences, then the influence tends to be greater. Content or posts on social media can indirectly influence individuals' perceptions and actions in real life, such as the influence of advertisements or posts by celebrities and influencers about their beauty and lifestyle.

Individuals consciously or unconsciously follow what they see and store it in their minds, and this can indirectly influence their thoughts and shape their views on the standards that exist on social media. However, in reality, content posted on social media has been heavily edited or modified to look “perfect.”

The beauty standards created on social media are not far from the influence of celebrities and influencers on social media. This can be seen from the various beauty standards in different countries today. In Indonesian society, the beauty standard that is portrayed in people's minds is fair skin, a slim body, a pointed nose, full lips, straight hair, smooth facial skin, large breasts and buttocks with a flat stomach and small waist. These characteristics are similar to most celebrities or influencers who are considered beautiful by Indonesian society. This is in contrast to the beauty standards in the United States, where dark skin or tan skin is the standard of beauty for them.

From the results of the study with the four informants selected through purposive sampling, the author found that there is a relationship between the use of Instagram social media and the formation of body image

and beauty standards in individuals' minds because of the high exposure to content or media that slowly but surely influences individuals to follow the standards or views formed on Instagram social media. This is proven by the results of the interviews conducted by the author, where the characteristics that meet the beauty standards according to the average individual are the same, namely fair skin, an ideal body that is not overly muscular, smooth facial skin, and attractive facial features.

Beauty standards that focus solely on a single characteristic tend to make individuals desire to alter parts of their bodies to meet those standards (Cahya et al., 2023). The informants explained that they felt their appearance did not meet the beauty standards depicted in their minds, resulting in feelings of insecurity, low self-esteem, and a desire to change their appearance in various ways in order to become beautiful or attractive.

From the data presented by the author, it can be seen that there is a relationship between the four informants and the content they consume in terms of body image formation, namely the use of or exposure to social media. Although they are classified as "light viewers" or "heavy viewers" in cultivation theory, the results of this study show that the informants still tend to follow the beauty standards formed on Instagram. Unfortunately, this leads individuals to lose their self-confidence and continue striving to follow the beauty standards depicted in their thoughts, which have been influenced by the content they consume on Instagram.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, the use of social media has a significant impact on the social and psychological lives of young adults. Social media can expand social networks and increase interaction between individuals, although sometimes these interactions are superficial (not close/intimate). However, social media also serves as a platform for users to obtain social support and relevant information. However, excessive use of social media can lead to feelings of anxiety and dependence, especially when comparing oneself to others who appear more successful or happier on Instagram.

Instagram, which is dominated by visual images that are often edited or altered to portray an "ideal" body image, can reinforce social comparison tendencies among its users. Young adults often compare their physical appearance with influencers or friends who post seemingly perfect images. This can trigger dissatisfaction with body shape, psychological problems such as excessive anxiety, low self-esteem, eating disorders, and an increased risk of depression. On the other hand, some individuals may also feel motivated to take better care of their bodies, depending on the type of content they consume and how they respond to such influences.

Another negative impact found is mental health issues, including increased feelings of stress, depression, and low self-esteem due to frequent comparisons with others on social media. These feelings tend to be more intense among young adults who are active social media users. Additionally, social media can influence individuals in terms of personal identity formation. Many young adults use Instagram as a platform to express themselves, which can help strengthen their sense of identity and boost their self-confidence. However, the identity or views individuals have about body image (beauty standards) are often influenced by trends and social expectations on social media, and this can potentially create a mismatch between the self-image projected and the individual's actual reality or real life.

Overall, while social media offers benefits in terms of social connections and information, its negative impacts on mental health, identity formation, and body image cannot be ignored. Therefore, a deeper understanding of healthy social media use is needed, along with wise supervision to minimize negative impacts. Social comparison triggered by content or standards on Instagram has a significant impact on body image, with negative effects more frequently experienced by users, especially if individuals lack the ability to filter and choose positive or supportive content that promotes a healthier and more realistic body image.

The author suggests the need for education for social media users, especially young adults, about the negative impact of social media comparison on body image, as well as encouraging the public, influencers, and content creators to promote diverse and positive body images. Psychological support such as counseling is highly recommended for individuals experiencing extreme body dissatisfaction in order to improve self-confidence and mental well-being. Additionally, further research is important to explore other factors influencing the impact of social media comparison and the role of various social media platforms in shaping users' body image.

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