

# Dynamics of Body Image Formation in Female Celebrities

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## Abstract

In this modern era, social media, especially Instagram, has formed a new celebrity population called "Selebgram," where the audience recognizes, admires, and follows their identities and lives. In Instagram, the communication between "Selebgram" and followers is through likes and comments. Several studies have been conducted on this communication system, and it has been found that likes and comments give rise to excessive social comparison and self-objectification, which can lead to an unrealistic idealization of body image and body image dissatisfaction. Such dissatisfaction then results in psychological disorders such as poor self- and body-esteem, unstable mood, stress, anxiety, and eating disorders, especially among teenage girls. Teen girl "selebgrammers" with high engagement on social media are thought to show a more complex body image idealization dynamic that will be examined in this qualitative study. Through interviews or online questionnaires, this study was conducted on six girl micro-celebrities in their teens in Indonesia. The results showed that the dynamics of body image idealization among girls on "Selebgram" consist of four steps: (1) internalization of the ideal media; (2) self-objectification and social comparison; (3) body image dissatisfaction, moderated by significant others, the purpose of using Instagram, and religion; and (4) self-branding containing self-presentation.

*Keywords:* Tripartite influence model, Self-objectification, Self-presentation, Self-branding.

## 1. Introduction

In this millennial era, a new celebrity population has formed in the online world called "micro-celebrity." In the Instagram application, these micro-celebrities are called celebrities. Celebrities stand out from other Instagram users because many other Instagram users adore, admire, and follow their identity and way of life. One of the most common sources of celebrity envy is the existence of self-branding. Self-branding is usually done through photos (Chua & Chang, 2016; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). From the photos celebrities share, celebrities get responses in the form of likes and comments from followers. Several studies have been conducted on this communication, and it has been found that likes and comments cause several problematic phenomena, including excessive social comparison (Chu et al., 2019; de Vries et al., 2018; Fox & Vendemia, 2016; Tiggemann et al., 2018), and self-objectification (Fardouly & Holland, 2018; Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016; Tiggemann et al., 2018).

The phenomenon of excessive social comparison and self-objectification has the opportunity to produce dissatisfaction with one's body image. Dissatisfaction with body image can lead to psychological problems such as poor self-evaluation, unstable mood, stress, anxiety, and eating disorders (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015; Holland & Tiggemann, 2016; Mills et al., 2018). Celebrities with high engagement on social media often show a high level of social comparison and self-objectification, so they are more at risk of experiencing psychological disorders (Fardouly et al., 2018; Hawes et al., 2020; Hogue & Mills, 2019; Holland & Tiggemann, 2016). Research into the effects of social media on body image focuses primarily on adolescent girls, apparently because: 1) Perceptions and views of body image in adolescent girls are so elastic that it is easy to form body image idealizations (Grogan, 2016); 2) The media's influence is more significant on adolescent girl body image formation (Dalky et al., 2017).

Several previous studies have raised the topic of body image perception in teenage girls using Instagram, especially body image idealization and dissatisfaction with body image (Burnette et al., 2017; Chua & Chang, 2016). Both studies suggest seeing whether the dynamic pattern of body image idealization can be made in the broader age range because one study examined only early adolescents (Burnette et al., 2017). The other examined only middle-aged

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adolescents (Chua & Chang, 2016), which later became the core basis of this research. This research focused on celebrity teenagers considering the identity of celebrities as public figures on social media so that their body image gets more attention from the public. The picture that emerges from the study's findings is an interpretive reconstruction of the participants' narratives, which included celebrities who were early adolescent girls, middle adolescents, and late adolescents.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Tripartite influence model

There is a pattern between social media use and body image (Thompson & Stice, 2001), compiled in the Tripartite Influence Model (Rodgers et al., 2015). The first stage of this model is the internalization of the ideal media. This first stage explains how the media triggers the absorption process of what a good body image should be and the extent to which a person has the desire to live up to those standards. The second stage is social comparison (Rodgers et al., 2015), which is the ease with which someone compares their appearance. It is known that at the adolescent stage of development, adolescents, especially adolescent girls, focus on appearance as a basis for social comparison (Santrock, 2011). The third stage is the emergence of dissatisfaction, aka body image, due to the internalization of ideal media and social comparison. Previous research found three factors in adolescent girls' cognitive processes related to body image (Muazzam et al., 2019): media, culture, and the right of the closest person.

### 2.2 Self-objectification

In addition to the three stages of the tripartite influence model, there is self-objectification (Andrew et al., 2016; Ghaznavi & Taylor, 2015). Self-objectification occurs when an individual, especially a teenage girl, internalizes the observer's view of her physical perceptions so that the individual will see herself as an object to be seen and judged by others (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). In objectifying themselves, teenage girls consider themselves to be instruments of followers—at least until they start editing photos.

### 2.3 Self-branding and Self-presentation

Self-branding—as is the case with commercial products—is where a person gains popularity or commercial gain by showing selling points in himself in the form of a unique, charismatic, and responsive identity (self-presentation) that is unique and responsive to the needs and interests of the audience (Khamis et al., 2017). Celebrities show that the selling point is usually made through photos, which have become an essential means of self-presentation on social media (Chua & Chang, 2016; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Many celebrities end up editing photos to fulfill their desired self-presentation (Fox & Vendemia, 2016), formulated the editing behavior as a selective self-presentation consisting of three stages: choose, edit, and post.

## 3. Research Method and Materials

This study used a qualitative approach (Adnyana, 2021), involving six female celebrities in Indonesia with the following criteria: (1) two adolescent girls aged 9–13 years (early adolescence); (2) two young women aged 14–18 (middle teens); and (3) two young women aged 19–21 (late teens). Data collection in this study used interview methods and online open questionnaires through Zoom Meeting and Google Forms. Four participants chose to complete an open questionnaire, and two participants chose an online interview. Four participants under the age of 18 had obtained parental consent to be participants in the study. In the form of audio, the interviews are transcribed into verbatim data. All the data is analyzed thematically through the coding stage to find themes by two coders: the researcher as the first coder and the co-author as the second coder. Research data is presented in the form of narratives and tables.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The demographics of participants are presented in groups in tables based on their adolescent developmental stages into the following table. The demographics of participants are presented in groups in tables based on their adolescent developmental stages into the following table 1. The first stage is the internalization of the ideal media. In this stage, researchers found two kinds of media internalization processes: trends and idol worship.

*"High 170s, BB 50s, have a small waist circumference." I grew up with the development of K-pop. From a young age, I liked K-pop, so I also looked. "So far, I like the bodies of K-pop idols." – N.*

**Table 1.** Participant Demographics

Characteristic	Participants					
	R	C	N	T	S	K
Gender	Woman	Woman	Woman	Woman	Woman	Woman
Age (in years)	12	12	15	17	19	20
Ethnic group	Javanese	Javanese	Javanese	Javanese	Javanese	Javanese
Body Shape	45 kg	37 kg	44 kg	43 kg	48 kg	51 kg
Heavy Tall	160 cm	145 cm	160 cm	152 cm	163 cm	153 cm
Use of Instagram	3 years	Four years	Six years	Four years	Seven years	Seven years
Frequency	Every day	Every day	Every day	Every day	Every day	Every day
Duration	30-60 min	≥ 60 min	≥ 60 min	≥ 60 min	≥ 60 min	30-60 min
Profession / Hobby	Pesings	Peragawati	Singer	Singer	Model	Photography

The narrative on Table 1 is Participant N's statement about his ideal body shape. The statement shows that Participant N has experienced idol worship. Idol worshipping refers to how the body shape of the participant's idol can influence the formation of an idealized body image for participants as fans (Barcaccia et al., 2017; Dalky et al., 2017; Kaewpradub et al., 2017). K and C also experienced a similar idol-worshipping phenomenon. Although the idols owned by N, K, and C differ, all three have body goals based on their respective idol figures. The second internalization process is exposure to trends received by participants, which affects the internalization of ideal body shapes captured by participants (Thompson & Stice, 2001). Three participants carried out this process: R, T, and S.

*"... On social media, there are so many people who inspire without having to think about whether their body shape is good to be displayed on Instagram or not." – S.*

Participant S was exposed to trends that did not emphasize body shape. R also admitted that he often sees figures in the media who can inspire the public without focusing on their body shape. Participants in T follow the popular fit body trend of 2020, characterized by abs and muscular curves slightly different from S and R. The data corroborated the results of previous research showing that the media was able to influence the formation of body image in the six participants. The second stage is social comparison. Social comparison can be divided into two motives: upward comparison and downward comparison (Rodgers et al., 2015). According to this study's findings, the upward comparison had a significant impact on how each participant perceived their body image, for instance:

*"It's like my thigh friends are really small while I'm pretty big." I've tried to shrink... " – R.*

It can be seen from the statement above that participants use others as a reference to develop themselves. The comparison then motivated participants to pursue these ideal standards. The six participants all went through the same process, namely, running a diet and exercise program to achieve the ideal body shape that can be published (self-objectification).

Self-objectification itself is one of the effects that arise due to the internalization of ideal media, along with social comparison (Fardouly & Holland, 2018; Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016; Ghaznavi & Taylor, 2015; Rodgers et al., 2015). There is a model called state self-objectification that triggers four social psychological processes in adolescents, namely: (1) supervision of appearance; (2) experience of a gap between self-appearance and expected standards; (3) activation of sexual attractiveness schemes owned; and (4) experience of stereotypes and risks to adolescents (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The data showed that all participants were monitoring their appearance. All participants in this study admitted that good self-appearance could also produce a good body image. Therefore, appearance needs to be prioritized when uploading content. In addition to monitoring appearance, the results also showed that all participants rated themselves as experiencing a gap in their appearance compared to expected standards.

The third psychological process is the activation of the sexual attraction scheme possessed. The activation of the scheme in question is how the subject focuses on the prominence of his excess. Here are what participants said when researchers asked about their opinions on editing or editing content:

*"Yes, because I think confidence is important in building yourself." So do it as long as it is not excessive and reasonable... " – S*

*"Yes. Editing is really necessary. For example, the lips are less red. It must be edited. Anyway, the imperfections are reduced..." – N.*

*"Yes, as long as I can show my best, why not?" – T.*

*"It's necessary... It's more about the effect, ka, the photo effect is like that... "The lighting is good; let it be brighter." – C.*

It can be concluded from the four participants above that they edit photos before uploading them to make them look better and satisfy followers' expectations. Unlike the other four participants, participant K and Participant R answered that editing is necessary, but the focus is not on improving appearance. Participant K said he often banged his legs and disguised bruises so his followers would not worry. While Participant R focuses on his singing skills, he often edits singing videos so followers do not hear their voice.

The final psychological process is the experience of stereotypes and risks for adolescents. S and C suggest that her job as a model has strict body-shape criteria. This body shape criterion is based on stereotypes of how the ideal body shape, high selling value, and ability to highlight the clothes are demonstrated. N and T have also experienced stereotypes about ideal body shapes as entertainers. This experience exists when they have not fulfilled the stereotype and get insulted. K has also witnessed how another celebrity was insulted for not having a slim body shape, influencing K's thinking about stereotypes and the risk of body shape in teenagers. It can be concluded that all six participants experienced social comparison or self-objectification.

The third stage is dissatisfaction with body image. Various factors, both internal and external, influence body image energy. There are three external factors in adolescent cognitive processes related to body image satisfaction (Muazzam et al., 2019): (1) media (trends and idol worship); (2) culture; and (3) pressure from significant others (family and peers). In addition to these external factors, researchers found two internal factors that influence self-acceptance of body image: (1) self-interest (the purpose of using Instagram); and (2) religiosity.

The external factors of the media have been explained earlier in stage I, namely the internalization of the ideal media. Next up is culture, which has also been found to influence body image formation. This culture is very closely seen in participants S and C, both of whom also work as models. In this field, there are mandatory body-shape criteria. S and C participants admitted they were unsatisfied with their height because they needed to meet the criteria in the field's culture. Here are the words of participants S and C.

*"... Sometimes I am still insecure about my height. " – S.*

*"Part of the hips are the same height, brother. Insecure like that. " – C.*

For external factors, significant others are divided into two categories: pressure obtained from family and peers. Two participants in the early adolescence category experienced the strongest influences from the family, and both participants showed that siblings and parents influenced their body image assessment. Here are the sayings of participants R and C.

*"Emm, starting to grow acne is directly related to Mama. "Let us take care of it, do not be dirty.*

*"Let it not be... the acne is not severe, that is it." – R.*

*Mom, who likes to comment like that, sis? Comments from parents – C.*

In contrast, peer pressure influenced middle- and late-adolescent participants more than family. S, K, and N participants are often seen drawing inspiration from content submitted by other celebrities. Participant T has also received constructive comments from his closest friends about how to shape a body that matches his current height. Factors in subsequent body image assessments are internal factors. The first internal factor is self-interest. In this case, all six participants used Instagram out of self-interest. Participants S and C, who also work as models, opened Instagram as a source of income. They have demands to keep their body shape aligned with the modeling culture.

Similarly, participants N and T also began to focus on pursuing a career as singers or entertainers. N and T's participants believe an entertainer's appearance and body shape are essential. Here are the sayings of participants N and T.

*"I like Instagram, but I need to upload a good one. So rich in singing, yes, good singing. It should be worth it to be uploaded on Instagram. " – N.*

*"I think personally, body image is important, especially since I am an entertainer, I do not like body shaming, but I also have to be aware that the first thing people see out there is 'visual.'" – T*

Unlike the case of Participant K and Participant R., the purpose of using Instagram for these two participants is to develop their personalities and relationships. With this purpose in mind, neither participant felt significant pressure on his body image. Here are the words of participants K and R.

"... Continue to be able to channel hobbies, like photography, like that, for example..." – K

"... mmmm makes communication easier si, application to facilitate communication" – R

The second internal factor is *religiosity*. The results showed that participants' self-acceptance was influenced by belief or religion. Here are the answers some participants had to say when researchers asked what each participant meant to their bodies?

"Body image in my opinion is how I want to give people the image that my body is valuable and my body belongs to me and my God." – S

"... this is already from God, to be thankful" – R

Furthermore, here are the same participants' words when researchers explored the level of participants' self-acceptance of the shortcomings of the subjects.

"My body shape, in my opinion, is ideal according to the health scale" – S

"Emm, my thigh is Lumay... Aga... big, if I run, I am more comfortable than other friends" – R

The answers describe the meaning of the body and the participant's responses to deficiencies in the body. It was seen that participants who interpreted the body spiritually showed self-acceptance. In other words, the participants' high level of religiosity indicated a higher self-acceptance attitude. The results of body image acceptance based on body meaning can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Body Image Acceptance

Participation	Influence	
	Body Meaning	Acceptance
R	God's grace	Satisfied
C	A gift from God	Satisfied
N	Aspects of self that need to be developed	Not satisfied yet
T	Necessity as <i>an entertainer</i>	Not satisfied yet
S	God's Entrustment	Satisfied
K	God's creation is different and there is no standardization	Satisfied

In the stage of body image dissatisfaction, it can be concluded that the media, culture, closest people, the purpose of using Instagram, and the religiosity of individuals affect the level of dissatisfaction with body image. All six participants received media influence. Modeling culture also had an impact on model participants. External family factors strongly influence the early adolescent age category. Peer and external factors strongly influence the age category of middle and late adolescents. The purpose of using Instagram also exerts a different pressure. High levels of religiosity also indicate lower dissatisfaction. The fourth stage is self-branding among celebrities. Self-branding is closely related to self-presentation. Fox & Vendemia (2016) found a selective self-presentation model divided into three stages: choose, edit, and post. Adolescents undergo these three stages to overcome sociocultural pressures on their body image. The first topic of discussion in this theme is the self-presentation of each participant. Here is what each participant had to say:

"The image I want to display on my Instagram is that I want to be seen as unique and have a different character..." – S.

"A rich image just "be yourself." The reason: is just confused about whom to follow if you do not know yourself. I am also shy about revealing my feelings on camera." – K.

"Cool, beautiful, tall, kind. How about it... Physical appearance is significant on Instagram. Everyone wants to show me the good ones. No one wants to show the bad side..." – N.

"-humble, full of spirits. Because I want to be known by people as a 17-year-old girl who dreams of becoming a singer..." – T

*"Mmm, how do you explain it... ee kaya, yes nge-post – post competitions like that. Participating in the competition was videotaped continuously uploaded on Instagram. Anyway, about talent." – R*

*"I usually use Instagram more often to promote (promoting myself as a model)." – C.*

The statements of S and T show a focus on personality traits that are the selling points of participants S and T. R presents himself as a talented person, so his talents have become the selling point for participants. Physical appearance becomes the selling point for N and C. On the other hand, participant K has a different view. Participant K admitted that what was displayed on social media was more of a form of expression than a unique selling point for him. All participants performed selective self-presentation by showing the desired image or self-presentation. The first stage of selective self-presentation is choice, where the subject sorts out what content will be shared on social media. Participant R explained this stage in his opinion by comparing current Instagram usage patterns with those at the beginning of using Instagram or before participants became celebrities.

*"In the past, it was still messy up, for example, want this, do this. If now, for example, eem wants to take pictures, for example, those who are rich in things, what is squishy rich, now they are embarrassed. hehe" – R*

Based on this, it is known that the sorting carried out by participants is carried out based on what image the participants want to show. Photos or content that is not representative of the image will be removed. The second stage is editing, where the subject edits to highlight the best features of celebrities and disguise the features of celebrities that are not good. Phase II explains that the themes of social comparison and self-objectification trigger the thought that editing is what celebrities need. In discussing this sub-theme, researchers relate the meaning of Instagram to participants and the need for editing. Here are the participants' words when asked what Instagram means to them.

*"Now Instagram is one of my platforms in work because almost all of my work comes from the world of social media, so Instagram is one of the important social media for me today..." – S.*

*"... application to facilitate communication ... continues to know the same singing competitions and pageant competitions like that from Instagram." – R.*

The statement above shows that Instagram is only a medium of communication and information for self-development and social relationships. On the other hand, participant S uses Instagram as a medium in her work. The difference in the use of Instagram among participants shows that each participant has different content quality standards. The third stage of selective self-presentation is "post," where subjects send photos that have been sorted and edited to get a positive response. Here is what participants said when researchers asked how significant the number of likes and comments on Instagram was for them.

*"... Honestly, these two things make me use it as a benchmark whether the content I create is good enough or not" – S*

*"Like it's just a number, so it's not too important. But if the comment is a bit important, because there is a reciprocity between the uploader-viewer." – K*

*"Haha, this is this. Likes and comments are important. If there are no likes, half the number of followers is considered a buy. If no one comments, they do not think they have friends..." – N.*

*"I think comments are critical because sometimes, there will be people saying, "Ah Buy Followers," so as much as possible, I think hard about what is worth it that I can upload so that there are many likes and comments." – T.*

*"EM actually doesn't exist, there is no that, what, if for example... It's rare to see likes. Usually most often it's the comment (because the subject feels bad if he doesn't reply)" – R*

*"Because we know how much friends respect, like my posts" – C*

Based on these statements, it is known that participants tend to care about public responses. Responses are used as a benchmark for whether the content he shares is classified as good or bad for public figures or celebrities. N and T make public response one of the labels' identifications. On the other hand, K and R use the response as a trigger for communication between themselves and the public.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis and discussion previously described, the results of this study showed that female celebrity adolescent participants in all different age categories showed similarities in body image formation patterns. The pattern follows the *Tripartite Influence Model*, which begins with the internalization of ideal media, continues with social comparison and ends with dissatisfaction with body image. Two themes have been identified as having a relationship with the tripartite influence model: self-objectification and self-presentation. The phase of self-objectification goes hand in hand with social comparison. Moreover, after the stage of body image dissatisfaction, researchers found the next stage is "self-branding", which contains a sub-theme of "self-presentation".

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