

“Me and My Body”: The Role of Self-Criticism in Body Dissatisfaction Among Female Emerging Adult Instagram Users

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Abstract: The era of digitalization increases the use of social media, one of which is Instagram social media. Through various features provided, Instagram can allow individuals to display the desired ideal body image, so that exposure to the ideal body can have an impact on the psychological condition of individuals, one of which is body dissatisfaction. This study aims to investigate the influence of self-criticism on the body dissatisfaction of women emerging adulthood Instagram users in DKI Jakarta. This research design uses a correlational quantitative design with sampling techniques in this study using a non-probability sampling method with a type of accidental sampling with a total of 390 participants. The study used two scales that have been adapted by researchers, the Body Dissatisfaction Scale for Women to measure body dissatisfaction and the Form of Self-Criticizing/Attacking & Self-Reassuring Scale to measure self-criticism. The data analysis technique in this study is simple linear regression. The results of this study show that the accepted hypothesis that self-criticism has a significant influence on the body dissatisfaction of women emerging adulthood Instagram users in DKI Jakarta ($t = 19,165$; $p = 0,000 < 0,05$; $R^2 = 0,486$). In this case, self-criticism contributed to body dissatisfaction by 48.6%. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the higher the self-criticism, the higher the body dissatisfaction in women in their emerging adulthood.

Keywords: self-criticism, body dissatisfaction, women, emerging adulthood, instagram

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Introduction

In the current era of digitalization, society has become inseparable from internet use. The number of internet users continues to grow annually; according to the Chairperson of the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), 77% of the Indonesian population are now internet users (Dewi, 2022). This increase is accompanied by a 12.35% rise in social media usage in 2022. As of January 2022, there were at least 191 million active social media users, with the most frequently used applications being WhatsApp (88.7%), Instagram (84.8%), and Facebook (81.3%) (Mahdi, 2022).

A survey by Napoleon Cat (2022) further revealed that the largest demographic of Instagram users in Indonesia in 2022 fell within the 18–24 age range (37.5%), dominated by females (54%). According to Santrock (2016), this age range corresponds to the developmental stage of emerging adulthood, a transitional period from adolescence to early adulthood. During emerging adulthood, individuals begin to evaluate themselves by trying to understand how others view them and by assessing what makes them attractive in others' eyes. Consequently, this period is often characterized by fluctuations in both positive and negative emotions. Individuals in this stage face various developmental responsibilities and tasks, such as establishing romantic relationships, fulfilling educational and career obligations, and exploring ways to achieve a coherent self-concept and an ideal self (Haan et al., 1968).

One-way individuals seek to understand their self-concept and ideal self is through exploration on Instagram to build and maintain social connections (Aryati & Halimah, 2021; Bjornsen, 2018). In the pursuit of social interaction, Instagram facilitates engagement through various features, such as the "like" button, comment sections, the "follow" feature, and direct messaging (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018). This environment allows users to easily follow others, including peers and celebrities, who often display idealized body images (Sakinah & Sumaryanti, 2020).

Exposure to idealized body images on Instagram can be perceived as social pressure to conform to beauty standards, which individuals may then internalize. Persistent exposure to these ideals can alter an individual's emotional state and behavior toward themselves (Hall, 2009). Such changes often result in negative impacts, including mood disturbances, decreased self-esteem, and body dissatisfaction (Prichard et al., 2020; Rafati, 2021; Beenen, 2021; Pedalino & Camerini, 2022).

Body dissatisfaction is defined as an individual's experience of their body image resulting from the discrepancy between their interpretation of their physical self and the perceived ideal body standard (Tariq & Ijaz, 2015). These feelings arise from the perceived incongruence between actual body weight and the desired body shape, which subsequently affects emotions and behaviors (Wade, 2009). Body dissatisfaction serves as a predictor for negative affect and dieting behaviors in women (McCabe, 2001; Dunkley et al., 2001). Individuals dissatisfied with their bodies tend to harbor negative attitudes toward their physical appearance (Heider, 2018). Thus, body dissatisfaction refers to a subjective negative evaluation of one's weight and physical shape (Stice & Shaw, 2002), encompassing aspects such as weight, shape, skeletal structure, and facial features (Tariq & Ijaz, 2015).

Previous research indicates that the intensity of Instagram use significantly influences body dissatisfaction among women in emerging adulthood (Yapri & Dewi, 2021). Findings suggest that higher intensity of Instagram use correlates with higher levels of body dissatisfaction. Additionally, Quittkat et al. (2019) found that women report higher levels of body dissatisfaction compared to men. Specifically, women entering adulthood who experience Instagram addiction show high rates of body dissatisfaction, reaching 59.81% or 128 individuals in certain samples (Sakinah & Sumaryanti, 2020). Thus, women are more susceptible to body dissatisfaction resulting from prolonged social media use.

Individuals experiencing body dissatisfaction often engage in constant social comparison with those perceived as the "ideal standard" (Sakinah & Sumaryanti, 2020). When individuals lack objective norms for self-evaluation, they use others as a benchmark (Amanalachioaie, 2021). Those who evaluate themselves negatively often assume that others will also evaluate them poorly (Ferreira, 2014). Consequently, they strive for perfection to mitigate these perceived negative evaluations, a process driven by self-criticism (Gilbert et al., 2004).

Self-criticism involves feelings of inferiority and can be viewed as a form of "psychological self-abuse" linked to poor social relationships (Gilbert et al., 2004). Self-critical individuals tend to evaluate themselves negatively (Shahar et al., 2015). While everyone possesses the capacity for self-evaluation, those with high levels of self-criticism do so harshly, often through self-insult and hostility (Shahar et al., 2015). Gilbert et al. (2004) identified two components of self-criticism: the *inadequate self* and the *hated self*. Excessive self-criticism can significantly trigger body dissatisfaction.

While previous studies have demonstrated a relationship between self-criticism and body dissatisfaction (Aqmarina, 2019; Ferreira et al., 2014; Dreibrodt, 2021; Momene, 2021), these studies have predominantly focused on clinical populations with psychopathological conditions, such as eating disorders and depression. Research on non-clinical groups, specifically women in emerging adulthood, is crucial as they occupy a unique developmental stage. Furthermore, previous research has often overlooked cultural contexts. In Indonesia, where the majority of Instagram users are female (54%), individuals face unique social pressures regarding beauty standards that may differ from Western contexts. These distinct developmental and sociocultural characteristics likely contribute to variations in how self-criticism influences body dissatisfaction.

Therefore, this study aims to determine the effect of self-criticism on body dissatisfaction among female Instagram users in the emerging adulthood stage. Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the field of psychology, particularly regarding self-criticism and body dissatisfaction. Practically, it aims to provide insights for both parents and young women navigating these issues. Based on the literature review, the hypothesis of this study is that self-criticism significantly affects body dissatisfaction in female emerging adult Instagram users.

Method

This study employed a quantitative correlational design. Participants consisted of 390 women aged 18-25 who are active Instagram users residing in Jakarta (DKI Jakarta). Jakarta was selected because it recorded the highest percentage of internet access in Indonesia in 2021 (Rizaty, 2022). Due to the unknown population size, the Lemeshow (1997) formula with a 5% margin of error was used to determine the sample size. The sampling technique utilized was accidental sampling, a form of non-probability sampling.

Two instruments were adapted following the procedure outlined by Beaton (2000), which included translation, back-translation, content validation by three psychology experts, readability testing with five respondents, a pilot study with 38 respondents, and analysis of item discrimination and reliability.

Body Dissatisfaction: Measured using an adapted version of the *Body Dissatisfaction Scale for Women (BDS-W)* by Tariq & Ijaz (2015). Operatively, body dissatisfaction is defined as the thoughts and feelings arising from the discrepancy between an individual's actual body shape, weight, skeletal structure, and facial features compared to their ideal standards. The scale consists of 26 items across three dimensions: body shape/weight, skeletal structure, and facial features. The adapted scale demonstrated content validity between 0.92 and 1.00, item discrimination indices between 0.488 and 0.851 for 25 items (Pearson Product-Moment), and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.909.

Self-Criticism: Measured using an adapted version of the *Forms of Self-Criticising/Attacking & Self-Reassuring Scale (FSCRS)* by Gilbert et al. (2004). Self-criticism is operatively defined as thoughts and behaviors indicating that one does not meet their own standards, often manifested through self-punitive thoughts. The scale includes 14 items covering the *hated self* and *inadequate self* dimensions. It showed content validity between 0.92 and 1.00, item discrimination indices between 0.335 and 0.745, and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91.

Additionally, data regarding Instagram activity, including daily usage frequency (hours/day) and interaction levels (number of posts, likes, and comments), were collected. Data collection was conducted via Google Forms distributed across social media platforms, primarily Instagram.

Descriptive statistics were used to profile the variables. Assumptions for regression were tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality, as well as linearity and heteroscedasticity tests. The hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression via SPSS for Windows version 27 to determine the effect of self-criticism on body dissatisfaction. Supplemental correlation analyses were also performed to examine the relationship between Instagram usage patterns and body dissatisfaction.

Result and Discussion

The participants in this study were women in emerging adulthood, ranging from 18 to 25 years of age. The majority of the participants were 22 years old (22.6%).

Tabel 1. Demographic Profile of Participants by Age (N = 390)

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
18	42	10,8%
19	31	7,9%
20	40	10,3%
21	58	14,9%
22	88	22,6%
23	59	15,1%
24	21	5,4%
25	51	13,4%

In addition to the demographic data above, this study also highlighted the intensity of respondents' Instagram usage. In terms of usage activity, the average duration was 3.2 hours per day (SD = 1.8).

Based on Table 2, the empirical mean for self-criticism (24.72) is lower than the hypothetical mean (28). This indicates that, on average, the respondents' self-criticism levels fall into the low category. Similarly, for the body dissatisfaction variable, the empirical mean (42.21) is lower than the hypothetical mean (50), indicating that the respondents' body dissatisfaction is generally low.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics (N = 390)

Variable	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Empirical				
Self-Criticism	0	56	24,72	13,976
Body Dissatisfaction	0	100	42,21	22,976
Hypothetical				
Self-Criticism	0	56	28	16,17
Body Dissatisfaction	0	100	50	28,87

Assumption tests were conducted to determine the appropriateness of parametric data analysis. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality indicated that the data were normally distributed ($p = 0.200$; $p > 0.05$). Linearity testing confirmed a linear relationship between self-criticism and body dissatisfaction ($p = 0.108$; $p > 0.05$). Furthermore, heteroscedasticity testing using the Spearman's rho method revealed no heteroscedasticity issues ($p = 0.275$; $p > 0.05$).

Tabel 3. Hypothesis Testing Results

Variable	β	T	F	p	R ²
Self-Criticism	1,146	19,165	367,297	0,000	0,486
Body Dissatisfaction	13,870	8,168			

Based on the simple linear regression analysis (Table 3), the following regression equation was derived:

$$Y = a + bX$$

$$Y = 13,870 + 1,146X$$

The constant value of 13.870 implies that if self-criticism remains constant, the body dissatisfaction score is 13.870. The regression coefficient of 1.146 indicates that for every 1% increase in self-criticism (X), body dissatisfaction (Y) increases by 1.146 units.

Table 3 demonstrates that self-criticism significantly influences body dissatisfaction ($F(1, 388) = 367.297, p < 0.05$), leading to the acceptance of the research hypothesis. The positive B value indicates that self-criticism has a significant positive effect on body dissatisfaction; thus, higher self-criticism corresponds to higher body dissatisfaction. Self-criticism predicts 48.6% of the variance in body dissatisfaction ($R^2 = 0.486$), while other variables contribute the remaining 51.4%.

Tabel 4. Contribution of Self-Criticism Facets to Body Dissatisfaction

Self-Criticism Facets	β	Effective Contribution	Total Effective Contribution
<i>Inadequate Self</i>	0,963	25%	48,6%
<i>Hated Self</i>	1,457	23,6%	

As shown in Table 4, the *inadequate self* facet contributes 25% to body dissatisfaction, while the *hated self* facet contributes 23.6%. This suggests that the *inadequate self* aspect has a greater impact on the body dissatisfaction of female emerging adult Instagram users than the *hated self* aspect.

In addition to the primary analysis, this study examined the correlation between Instagram usage frequency and body dissatisfaction. The results showed a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.32; p = 0.000$), meaning that increased frequency of Instagram access is associated with higher levels of body dissatisfaction.

Descriptive analysis revealed that respondents reported a low average level of self-criticism. This may be attributed to maturation, as increasing age often allows individuals to be less judgmental and maintain more positive self-evaluations (Michaeli et al., 2022). Similarly, the low average level of body dissatisfaction aligns with the findings of Michaeli et al. (2022). Research by Quittkat et al. (2019) further suggests that while body appreciation remains stable or increases with age in women, the willingness to make extreme sacrifices to achieve an "ideal" appearance tends to decrease as they grow older.

The findings confirm a positive effect of self-criticism on body dissatisfaction, consistent with Aqmarina (2019), who posits that feelings of inadequacy and self-hatred are linked to dissatisfaction with one's physical size and appearance. Dreibrodt (2021) also noted that self-criticism, manifesting as perceived inadequacy, creates a negative body image perception, driving dissatisfaction. These results are further supported by Ferreira et al. (2014).

Self-criticism often arises from a discrepancy between reality and an individual's internalized standards (Carver, 1998). Individuals tend to criticize themselves when they fail to meet perfectionist standards, such as societal beauty ideals (Wade, 2013; Duarte, 2014). This failure increases the propensity for body dissatisfaction (Yang et al., 2017), which is triggered by the perceived incongruence between actual weight/shape and the desired ideal (Wade, 2009; Heider, 2018).

The study highlights that the *inadequate self* facet contributes more significantly to body dissatisfaction than the *hated self* facet among female emerging adults. The *inadequate self* is linked to feelings of being "not good enough" or "unattractive," often resulting from negative upward social comparisons. Upward comparison can foster feelings of inferiority when an individual's perceived flaws are contrasted against idealized standards (Amalia et al., 2022), ultimately leading to body dissatisfaction (Ferreira et al., 2014).

Interestingly, these results contrast with Dreibrodt (2021), who found that the *hated self* facet, characterized by self-loathing and self-harming tendencies (Gilbert et al., 2004), was a stronger contributor. This discrepancy likely stems from participant characteristics: Dreibrodt's sample consisted of clinical patients with *anorexia nervosa*, who typically exhibit higher self-hatred and self-aggression (Bjork, 2006) than the non-clinical sample of emerging adult Instagram users in this study.

Supplemental analysis confirms that Instagram activity is closely linked to body dissatisfaction. Features such as likes, comments, and following allow for constant exposure to idealized bodies (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018; Sakinah & Sumaryanti, 2020). This exposure facilitates negative upward

comparisons, internalizing the "ideal" body and fostering negative self-views (Fardouly et al., 2018). Failure to meet these digitally-mediated standards triggers self-criticism, which ultimately culminates in heightened body dissatisfaction (Gattud et al., 2020).

Conclusion

This study examined the role of self-criticism in body dissatisfaction among female emerging adult Instagram users. The results conclude that self-criticism significantly and positively influences body dissatisfaction. Furthermore, Instagram usage frequency is strongly correlated with body dissatisfaction.

This study has limitations, as it did not explore potential moderating or mediating variables in the relationship between self-criticism, Instagram use, and body dissatisfaction. Future research should investigate these additional factors. Based on these findings, psychological interventions focused on increasing self-esteem and self-compassion are recommended for female emerging adults to mitigate self-criticism and improve body satisfaction.

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