

## Body Dissatisfaction in Overweight Adolescents: The Role of Self Compassion and Gender

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### Keywords

Body Dissatisfaction,  
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### Abstract

The body changes during adolescence, from puberty to adulthood. Late adolescents generally have completed physical development and grown to their full adult height. These changes make them pay great attention to their body. Females tend to regard a slender body shape as attractive, while males tend to perceive a more masculine muscular body shape as attractive. They might feel that their body is not as good as other people, especially adolescents who are overweight. Body dissatisfaction refers to holding negative thoughts or feelings about one's body image. Those who are dissatisfied with their body will describe the difference between their subjective perception of their body and their ideal body image. Individuals' attitude who are patient, kind, and understanding instead of judging themselves when facing shortcomings is known as self-compassion. The first purpose of this research was to find out the relationship between self-compassion with body dissatisfaction among overweight adolescents, and the second was how body dissatisfaction differs between males and females. The sample in this research used purposive sampling and obtained 103 late adolescent participants who had BMI > 23kg/m<sup>2</sup>. Measuring tools used in this study were the Indonesian version of Self-Compassion Scale and the Body Shape Questionnaire-34. Based on the correlation test results obtained a negative relationship between self-compassion with body dissatisfaction. So if overweight adolescents' self-compassion is getting higher, their body dissatisfaction becomes lower and vice versa. The difference test showed that females were more dissatisfied with their bodies than males. In general, the level of both self-compassion and the level of body dissatisfaction of participants were at medium category.

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## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is one of the developmental phases which experienced by everyone (Bluth & Blanton, 2015). Adolescence is a transition period from childhood to adulthood which started from the age range of 10 to 13 years old and ended at around 18 to 22 years old. The experiences of those in their early and late adolescents can vary widely. There are biological, cognitive, and socioemotional changes. They will start to have interest in identity exploration, career, and relationship with different gender. These tend to be more prominent in late adolescence than early adolescence (Bluth & Blanton, 2015; Santrock, 2012).

At this time, adolescents are faced with developmental tasks. When the tasks are successfully completed, they will get satisfaction and happiness, and will be accepted by their environment. Those successes will also determine the individuals can be succeed or not in fulfilling development tasks on the next phase (Hurlock, 1991). Associated with the physical changes that occur in adolescents, one of the developmental tasks is the ability in accepting their physical condition and using it effectively. During this developmental period, changes in their body often cause problems for them, so that they have difficulties to accept circumstances and their body effectively. Papalia explains that some adolescents whose faced with various changes can experience problems that happened simultaneously (in Anggraheni & Rahmandani, 2019).

Problems in adolescents make them notice details, every part of their physique which currently develops. They are curious and interested in everything about their appearance (Indriyati in Laksmiawati et al., 2017). Hurlock (1991) stated that adolescents often have a hard time accepting their bodies and understanding their appearance when they've grown up as a mature person.

aObesity is said to be associated with early puberty in girls and delayed puberty in boys (Hazen et al., 2008; Rahayu & Ariana, 2021). Male adolescents tend to be more satisfied when passing puberty period due to increased muscle mass. However, internalization of the ideal body in males can also cause body dissatisfaction because of the mismatch between the ideal body and their actual body (Rahayu & Ariana, 2021). When male adolescents are objectively overweight, they begin to worry about their body shape (Presnell et al., 2004).

Having difficulty in controlling ideal body weight might cause adolescents to become overweight or obese. Quoted from page Kemenkes (2019) obesity or overweight refers to body mass index (BMI) obtained from the quotient between body weight (kg) and height expressed in meters squared ( $m^2$ ) is more than  $23 \text{ kg}/m^2$  up to  $27 \text{ kg}/m^2$ , and if the results obtained exceed  $28 \text{ kg}/m^2$  then obesity is declared. According to WHO (2000), obesity is excessive accumulation of fat due to an imbalance energy intake with energy expenditures in long time (Kemenkes, 2021). There are a lot of media that displays the description of ideal body image and beauty, so that adolescents want to be like the one which depicted in media. Fardouly, Willburgers, and Vartanian (in Andini, 2020) states that social media is currently giving rise to exists various negative effects. One of those effects can influence how adolescents evaluate their bodies.

There is a stereotype that if males achieved ideal body type which is thin or muscular body, they would get happiness, success and love. When late adolescent males are out of this ideal body standard, there will be a feeling of dissatisfaction with their bodies and will effect the physiological and psychological well-being of these adolescents (Healey in Ganecwari & Wilani, 2019). Male's ideal body is currently described by the large level of muscles in the upper body: wide chest and shoulder, as well as big bicep muscles, with slim waist and maintain a low body fat level (Oehlhof et al. in Kim, 2022).

The ideal body image for females today is depicted as someone with big breasts, flat belly, big buttocks, and long legs. When teenage girls don't accomplish that ideal body then a feeling of dissatisfaction will appear with her body. The ideal body standard will make the individual compare his or her body with the standard ideal body of society, thus body dissatisfaction will arise (Grogan in Marizka et al., 2019). A study conducted by Andini (2020) stated that social media displays lots of

images of somebody's appearance which is considered more interesting. It would cause body dissatisfaction. So if adolescents feel their appearance is not as good as other person, they will not feel satisfied with their bodies or will experience body dissatisfaction.

Dissatisfaction with body refers to somebody's thoughts and negative feelings about her or his body including body size, form, muscle mass, weight, and the difference evaluation between their actual body with the ideal body they wanted (Cash & Fleming, 2002; Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990; Pruzinsky & Cash, 1990). Cash (in Kim, 2022) also stated body dissatisfaction includes negative thoughts and feelings about individual weight and body shape, as well as overall physical appearance, and or partial.

Body dissatisfaction can cause problems for adolescents, impact on their daily life, and even can cause the existence of psychological disturbance on individual like depression, body dysmorphic disorder, anorexia nervosa, and bulimia. Body dissatisfaction can exist on individual because of various factors. According to Grogan (in Turnip & Fakhurrozi, 2020) states that the causal factors of body dissatisfaction are culture, social media, age, social class, interpersonal relationship, and personality. A number of activities that have been done on social media also give influence on adolescents. In effort to overcome negative impact that can be generated by body dissatisfaction, adolescents need to think positively about their body and accept it, so that needed potential factor that can reduce dissatisfaction on body. Andini (2020) stated a number of protective factors from increasing body dissatisfaction, one of those is self-compassion. Self-compassion is self-understanding about suffering, experiencing failure, or making error with no judging, avoiding lack and imperfection (Neff, 2003; Neff et al., 2017). Self-compassion has three aspects, they are self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (Neff in Marizka et al., 2019).

Although studies about self-compassion with body dissatisfaction already lot, this problem is still important to research because, in this era of globalization, technological developments are very rapid and there are more and more social media platforms. With this digitalization era, teenagers can easily access social media which can potentially cause teens to pay more attention to the appearance of their body by looking at other people who according to their standards of beauty. Plus, nowadays there are also many types of facial and body treatments that spelled out affordable and already widely available for students so that students are more aware of appearance and their body. Therefore can stimulate body dissatisfaction.

Although more and more media displaying an ideal body image can increase body dissatisfaction in adolescents, however the existence of self-compassion as a potential factor can reduce body dissatisfaction in adolescents. Same case which said by Maher et al. (2021) that self-compassion can be placed in an optimal manner for reducing bad body image in men, considering its function as adaptive influence and coping strategies. Braun et al (in Maher et al., 2021) in a literature review of recent studies have proposed a number of pathways where self-compassion can act as a buffer or protection against body dissatisfaction in women. Therefore researchers are interested in examining (1) the relationship between self-compassion and body dissatisfaction, (2) the difference of body dissatisfaction in male and female which has overweight body.

## METHOD

### Design

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational design to see the correlation between two variables: self-compassion and body dissatisfaction. And also, a comparative design to see the difference in body dissatisfaction between males and females.

### Participants

The participants of this research were total 103 undergraduate students of Universitas Negeri Semarang, 42 males and 61 females. They were 18 – 22 years old and have Body Mass Index  $> 23\text{kg/m}^2$ .

### Instruments

The instruments used in this study were the Indonesian version of Self-Compassion Scale by Muttaqin et al. (2020) which consists of 25 items, and Indonesian version of Body Shape Questionnaire-34 by Sitepu (2020) which consists of 34 items.

### Data Analysis

The sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling. Data analysis techniques consist of normality tests, linearity tests, correlation tests with Product Moment correlation Pearsons, and difference test with Independent Sample t Test.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on data analysis, to examine the correlation between two variables need the results of normality test and linearity test. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test obtained a significance value of 0.090. The data can be indicated normal if the significance value is  $> 0.05$ , and not normal if  $< 0.05$ . So based on the result of normality test, it can be concluded that the data distribution is normal. Then the result of linearity test using the ANOVA, F 15.606 was obtained with a significance of 0.00. Because of significance value  $0.056 > 0.05$  so pattern connection between the two variables: self compassion with body dissatisfaction indicated linear.

**Table 1.** Correlation Test

<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	0,001
<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	-0,331

Based on the correlation test using Product Moments Pearsons, obtained result a sig value of  $0.001 < 0.05$ . It showed that there is significant correlation between self-compassion and body dissatisfaction in overweight late adolescents. The Pearson correlation value of this test was -0.331 therefore the relationship direction of two variables is negative, which means the more level of self-compassion in late adolescents who has excess body weight, the body dissatisfaction become lower. So also on the contrary if the self-compassion is less, so the more body dissatisfaction.

**Table 2.** Overall Descriptive Test (N=103)

Var	X Maks	X Min	Range	M	SD	Kat	Interval Skor	F	%
BD	197	34	163	118,505	31,058	Rendah	$X < M - 1SD$	16	15
							M-	74	72
						Sedang	$1SD \leq X < M + 1SD$		
						Tinggi	$M + 1SD \leq X$	13	13
SC	122	39	83	93,699	17,644	Rendah	$X < M - 1SD$	18	17
							M-	75	73
						Sedang	$1SD \leq X < M + 1SD$		
						Tinggi	$M + 1SD \leq X$	10	10

From description categorization in Table 2 showed that body dissatisfaction level of overweight adolescents in high, medium, and low category. As for amount subject on high category, that is 13% (as many as 13 people), in the medium category, namely 72% (as many as 74 people), and in the low category, namely 15% (as many as 16 people). So it can be concluded that the body dissatisfaction experienced by overweight late adolescents is on medium category. And the level of self-compassion as for amount subject in high category is 10% (as many as 10 people), in the medium category is 73% (as many as 75 people), and in the low category is 17% (as many as 18 people). So it can be concluded that overweight late adolescents' self-compassion is in medium category.

**Table 3.** Self Compassion by Gender

SC	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Male	42	96,76	14,427
	Female	61	91,59	19,388
<b>Independent Sample Test</b>				
<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>			0,145	

Based on the result of difference test of self compassion by gender, use Independent Sample Test obtained sig (2-tailed)  $0.145 > 0.05$ . It showed there was no significant differences between self-compassion in overweight late adolescents by gender.

**Table 4.** Body Dissatisfaction by Gender

BD	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Male	42	105,36	33,885
	Female	61	127,56	25,512
<b>Independent Sample Test</b>				
<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>			0,000	

Based on the result of difference test of body dissatisfaction by gender, use Independent Sample Test obtained sig (2-tailed)  $0.000 < 0.05$ . The results showed there was significant difference between body dissatisfaction in male and female overweight late adolescents.

Overall results of this research showed that from 103 participants, most of them were in moderate self-compassion and body dissatisfaction. It can be concluded that most of the overweight late adolescents are in a state of body dissatisfaction which participants perceived their body negatively, feel dissatisfied with their body, and compare their body perception with others. When notice other people's body shape, they feel their body shape is not as good as theirs, but they are not avoiding the situation where other people can see and evaluate their bodies.

Body dissatisfaction relates to how the individual evaluates and judges their body, so that the feeling of satisfaction with his or her body will decrease or increase. Individuals need to think positively about their bodies in order to accept shortcomings without judging harshly to themselves. This attitude is known as self-compassion.

There was negative correlation between self-compassion and body dissatisfaction in this research. This result explained that if late adolescents have a higher level of self-compassion therefore their body dissatisfaction becomes lower. And when they have lower self-compassion, they will have higher level of body dissatisfaction. Like Hursidi (2019) said that most research revealed that there is negative correlation between self-compassion and body dissatisfaction.

Participants' body dissatisfaction level in this study were in medium category. Participants with moderate body dissatisfaction show that they have a positive attitude to deal with changes and how they view their bodies. They don't make their bodies that are considered unsatisfactory to be a barrier for them to stay socialized. However at certain moments sometimes the thought about their body might be disturbing. Participants in this study felt worse than other people so they felt anxious when taking too lots of space. But they keep exercising or doing sports because their tight muscles sway-shake or visibly slack.

This study entails findings in field which show that the number of obesity continues to increase in Indonesia. Respondents in this study were late adolescents where 15% were overweight, 72% were categorized as obesity I, and 13% were categorized as obesity II. According to Cash, Winstead, and Janda describe body dissatisfaction is more common in people who are overweight than people with no obesity and higher on obese women than men (Alifa & Rizal, 2020).

Based on the results of this research, showed that there are differences of body dissatisfaction by gender. Although both gender in medium category of body dissatisfaction level, males' are lower than females'. One of the biological factors that cause body dissatisfaction in female is physical changes associated with puberty such as experiencing menstruation. It can cause embarrassed feelings because culture considers menstruation conveying more negative messages that make women feel far from the ideal standard of beauty (Jackson & Falmagne, 2013; Giaber et al in Stice & Whitenton, 2002). On latest studies show that both gender experience body dissatisfaction through different development stages and turn up into different behaviors (Silberstein et al. in Hurşidi, 2019).

According to Alidia (2018) women have more possibilities to evaluate certain body features in a negative way compared to men. Women's dissatisfaction with their bodies is almost always related to self-perception from overweight, whereas dissatisfaction in men circles is between anxiety about being overweight and losing weight or worry about being too thin.

In this study, the level of self-compassion in participant who are overweight is on medium category. Most of the subjects in this study had moderate levels of self-compassion which means the subject loves and treats themselves well, but sometimes they have difficulties accepting their weakness. Someone could see failure or problem in a broad perspective so that they are able to understand that the events experienced were not their fault and everyone else has felt the same situation. However, sometimes they feel miserable and think that other people are much happier. Subjects with moderate self-compassion are not able to see things in a balanced way, neither exaggerating nor underestimating. However, when we are down or experiencing hurtful things, sometimes we tend to dramatize problems that happened. Like what Mackintos et al. (in Wahyuni & Arsita, 2019) said that students with medium self-compassion tend to have higher self-esteem and self-acceptance. Neff in Hasmarlin & Hirmaningsih (2019) also said that adolescents with enough level of self-compassion are capable to cope with problems and stressors.

Results in this study showed there was no significant difference between self-compassion in respondents who are male and female. This result alines with research that had done by Hasmarlin & Hirmaningsih (2019) which showed there is no difference level of self-compassion if reviewed by gender. But based on empirical mean score showed that self-compassion score of male was 96.76 and female score was 91.59. In line with a study that have been done by Wahyuni and Arsita (2019) showed there is different score of self-compassion for male students was 3.28 and female self-compassion score was 3.19.

It is stated that males have a higher self-compassion level than females. This might be because when compared to men, women often blame and criticize themselves, feel alone when facing problems, and only focus on failure and negative emotions. According to Homan and Tylka (in Hurşidi, 2019) it seems that self-compassion helps women reduce unrealistic ideals in the media by supporting kindness and the same humanity. Women with a high sense of self-compassion may

notice that there is no universal standard. On the contrary, every person is unique and has their own goals they wished. In effect, this self-compassion facilitates disturbed beliefs about the existing ideal body in society. In addition, self-compassion does not only have a protective value for people who suffer from body dissatisfaction, but also increases healthier eating behavior in women circles (Schoenefeld & Webb in Hurşidi, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

The results revealed that self-compassion was associated with body dissatisfaction among overweight late adolescents. There was a negative relationship between those variables. It means when overweight adolescents are more compassionate towards themselves, their body dissatisfaction becomes lower and vice versa. When they have less self-compassion, the body dissatisfaction tends to be higher.

The results also showed body dissatisfaction difference by gender, females were more dissatisfied with their body than males. But there was no significant differences in self-compassion between both genders. In general, the level of self-compassion and body dissatisfaction of participants were at medium category.

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