



# Body Dissatisfaction Among Emerging Adulthood Women: What is the Role of Social Comparison

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**Abstract.** Body Dissatisfaction occurs a lot in women during emerging adulthood, this happens because at this phase women are required to be successful in their careers and in relationships with the opposite sex. The high demands from the social and family environment as well as exposure to mass media make women in this phase compare themselves with others. This study aims to determine the relationship between social comparison and body dissatisfaction in early adult women. A total of 350 women in early adulthood who were taken using the convenience sampling technique participated in this study. Research data was taken using The Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM) which has been adapted by the researcher through standardized adaptation procedures and the Body Dissatisfaction scale which was compiled by the researcher himself based on Rosen & Reiter (1995). Spearman's Rho correlation technique is used to analyze research data. The results show that there is a very significant relationship between social comparison and body dissatisfaction. The results of this study can be used as a reference for the importance of increasing Social Comparison in emerging adulthood women to reduce body dissatisfaction.

**Keywords:** Body Dissatisfaction · Social Comparison

## 1 Introduction

Physical changes are unavoidable in human growth. Physical changes that seem very obvious generally appear since adolescence which then enters the next developmental period, which is emerging adulthood (at the age of 18–25 years). Emerging adulthood has its own developmental tasks, including separation from parents, career and academic achievement. Making independent decisions, have social maturity, and looking for a partner [1]. Emerging adulthood developmental task is to start thinking about or even start getting married [2]. Being someone who is attractive, ideal, or in accordance with today's beauty standards is something that is important for women in emerging adulthood, especially in attracting the attention of the opposite sex. Most women feel unhappy with their bodies, or what is commonly known as body dissatisfaction [3]. This is because they have a negative view of their body shape. When someone gives a negative assessment of the body this is not entirely true because there may be a difference in judgment between

what is thought and the actual state of the body. The results of research conducted by Heider et al., [4] resulted that women who experienced high body dissatisfaction showed discrepancies in viewing the real state of their body shape and what their ideal shape was by showing that they wanted to be thinner. The definition of body dissatisfaction is the existence of negative opinions and negative feelings about a person's body, and this is an important general measure in determining a person's stress related to body shape [5].

Body dissatisfaction experienced by a person can have a negative impact on individuals who experience it, for example going on a unhealthy diet, exercising excessively, avoiding various social activities, or even doing plastic surgery and various beauty procedures that may be dangerous. Eating disorders could be trigger by Body dissatisfaction [3]. Individuals who experience body dissatisfaction give a negative assessment of body shape, are embarrassed when in a social environment, body checking, cover their body condition with clothes, or even withdraw from their environment [6]. Other studies show that body dissatisfaction can be a cause for a person going on a diet, causing eating disorders and having other negative impacts. [4]. Healthy behaviors are at greater risk when body dissatisfaction occurs including irregular eating, doing excessive body exercise, taking medications for diet and using steroid, and low self-esteem, unstable emotions, mental health disorders, and psychiatric disorders is also associated with body dissatisfaction. Including eating disorders and body dysmorphia [7]. Body Dissatisfaction can be raised in various forms including in the form of cognitive aspects such as the thought that someone will receive ridicule, in the affective aspect, namely a person feels ashamed, in the behavioral aspect, namely excessive exercise [8].

Women in emerging adulthood cannot be separated from various exposures from the media, both print media, written media, and social media that feature figures that are considered ideal today. Other than various exposures form the media, environment also unwittingly puts pressure on individuals, for example comments from parents, friends, or family who make negative comments about the condition of a person's body [3]. What is shown as an ideal figure in each period is not necessarily the same. Various exposures also show certain beauty norms that can be used as a benchmark for beauty standards, although on the other hand, beauty norms can help understand one's condition and how to adjust or deal with existing beauty standards [9]. Women in emerging adulthood will compare themselves with others or social comparison. The process of thinking about information about one or more other people in relation to the self is the definition of social comparison (Wood, 1996) [10]. Comparing oneself does not always have a positive impact on a person because in the process of social comparison a person will evaluate, make efforts to improve themselves, and strive for self-development. Social comparison can be a frame for individuals to explain how individuals accept pressure from the environment or peers [11]. Women in emerging adulthood live in an environment of direct contact with other individuals, peers, coworkers, or the opposite sex. The dynamics of life in emerging adulthood bring people competing to show success in any way. This can lead women in emerging adulthood to be involved in conducting social comparisons both in general and in specific physical conditions [12]. Evaluating one's body on how other people's body shapes make individuals more maladaptive [13].

## 2 Research Method

This research is quantitative research that bases research data on measurement results using a psychological scale which are Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM) scale to measure social comparison and body dissatisfaction scale which is based on the characteristics of body dissatisfaction from Rosen & Reiter. Data analysis in this study is Spearman's Rho non-parametric statistics using SPSS for Windows version 22 program. Non-parametric statistics were used because the distribution of research data was not normally distributed ( $p < 0.05$ ). Research begins by identifying the problems that arise. Then carried out a literature review related to the variables of this study.

### 2.1 Subject

The population in this study were women who were in the period of emerging adulthood (18–25 years). A total of 350 women in early adulthood who were taken using the convenience sampling technique participated in this study. The convenience sampling technique was chosen because the Covid-19 pandemic situation did not allow researchers to use random techniques. Of course, the researcher realizes that the use of this technique will have an impact on the generalization of research results. Research data was collected online using the Google Form and distributed to participants via Instagram and WhatsApp.

Participants in this study were students of High School, Vocational School equivalent, Diploma, Undergraduate and Postgraduate in Indonesia and were willing to become research participants.

### 2.2 Method of Collecting Data

This study uses 3 research instruments, To measure social comparison, a scale is used Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM). INCOM consists of 17 items with Validity moving from 0.435–0.799 reliability 0.909. The second scale used is body dissatisfaction which is based on the characteristics of body dissatisfaction from Rosen & Reiter. This scale consists of 17 items with validity ranging from 0.399 to 0.671, reliability 0.991.

### 2.3 Data Analysis Technique

The data in the study were analyzed using Spearman's Rho Correlation to see the relationship between social comparison and body dissatisfaction. The SPSS for Windows version 22 program is used in the data analysis process.

## 3 Result

### 3.1 Research Participant Data Demographic

Based on the demographic data of the participants in this study (Table 1 & Table 2), the highest percentage of participants in this study were women at the age of 20 years by 34.38%, women at the age of 19 years by 21.14%, and women at the age of 21 years by

**Table 1.** Participant Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18	37	10,57%
19	74	21,14%
20	120	34,28%
21	62	17,71%
22	35	10,00%
23	12	3,42%
24	4	1,14%
25	6	1,71%
	350	100%

**Table 2.** Participant Study Background

Study Background	Frequency	Percentage
Public Diploma	25	7,1%
Private Diploma	9	2,6%
Public Undergraduate	74	20,6%
Private Undergraduate	127	40%
Public High School/Vocational School	56	14,70%
Private High School/Vocational School	59	15%
	350	100%

17.71%. The educational background of this research subject varies, starting from high school/vocational equivalent, Diploma, and bachelor's degrees from public and private universities.

### 3.2 Normality Test

Based on the results of the assumption test (Table 3), it was found that the distribution of the data was not normal ( $p < 0,05$ ) therefore the data analysis in this study using non parametric statistic Spearman's Rho.

**Table 3.** Normality Test Results

Variable	Shapiro Wilk	p
Body Dis.-Social Comp.	0.974	< 0.001

**Table 4.** Hypotheses test

Variable	n	Spearman's Rho	p
Body Dis. – Social Comp.	350	-0.388	< 0.001

**Table 5.** Body Dissatisfaction Category

Category	Frequency	Percent
Very Low	16	4.571
Low	58	16.571
Average	169	48.286
High	94	26.857
Very High	13	3.714
Missing	0	0.000
Total	350	100.000

### 3.3 Hypotheses Testing

In Table 4 social comparison has a very significant negative relationship with body dissatisfaction ( $r_{xy} = -0.388$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This shows that the higher the social comparison score, the lower the body dissatisfaction score.

### 3.4 Category

From the calculation of categories regarding body dissatisfaction (Table 5), as many as 169 people (48.286%) are in the medium category, as many as 94 people (26.857%) are in the high category. This shows that 74% experience body dissatisfaction that needs attention. Moreover, there are 13 people in the very high category. From the calculation of social comparison (Table 6), 157 people (44.857%) were in the medium category, and 105 (30,000%) were in the high category.

**Table 6.** Social Comparison Category

Category	Frequency	Percent
Very Low	13	3.714
Low	64	18.286
Average	157	44.857
High	105	30.000
Very High	11	3.143
Missing	0	0.000
Total	350	100.000

## 4 Discussion

The results of this study indicate that there is a very significant negative relationship between social comparison and body dissatisfaction. This can be interpreted that the higher the social comparison score, the lower the body dissatisfaction score. Women during the Emerging Adulthood have the behavior of comparing themselves with others, both with figures who are considered ideal, role models, who are considered to have better appearance when compared to themselves or called upward comparisons or those who are considered to have no worse appearance when compared to themselves or called downward comparison. The measuring instrument used in this study shows how women in emerging adulthood make social comparisons between themselves and others. When women in emerging adulthood able see themselves more positively when compared to other people, so that they feel they have various advantages compared to their social environment, the lower body dissatisfaction they will experience.

In accordance with what is the main characteristic of body dissatisfaction, such as a negative assessment of one's own condition, and the discrepancy between what is true and what is an assessment of one's own condition, having a better perception of one's condition in social comparison makes body dissatisfaction experienced. Getting lower. Women in emerging adulthood that see themselves as someone who can see various positive things in their self will be experiencing lower body dissatisfaction. This is in line with the results of research conducted by Shofiyah & Sovitrina (2022) which found that when individuals compare themselves with others and perceive that they are inferior compare to others, the higher the level of body dissatisfaction experienced [3]. Based on the results of research conducted by McComb & Mills (2021) social comparisons made by individuals to the ideal figure, whether friends, idols, internet celebrities, can increase body dissatisfaction [14].

Having attention on body is something that remain occur on women in all stages [5]. Research by Taniguchi and Hubbard (2020) on young Japanese women showed that stronger perceived attainability will make positive association between appearance comparison and body dissatisfaction [15]. Body dissatisfaction might not only experience by emerging adulthood women and young women, but also by adolescent girls. Research by Mahon and Hevey (2021) about processing body image on social media in adolescent

girls showed that adolescent girls have knowledge about the unrealistic ideal body on social media and how those desirable body ideals might be incompatible with their look [16].

Socio cultural pressure also resulted having relationship with body dissatisfaction. Socio cultural pressure about the ideal body is higher in women than in men. Youthful appearance is something that indicate attractiveness and values in women. Older women reported having greater cognitive control over their body than younger women so less affected by socio cultural pressure [17]. Body dissatisfaction also could be experience among men. While women's body dissatisfaction is mostly focus on body or body parts, men's body dissatisfaction also focusing on muscle dissatisfaction. Eating pathology, body dissatisfaction, and muscle dissatisfaction was revealed to have complex and significant relationship with masculinity [18]. Eating disorder is the risk for trans people who experience distress of body dissatisfaction. The culture of thin is beautiful is common emphasize message in Western Culture that has been internalize by trans women. Trans people core distress is body dissatisfaction [19].

Clinical interventions that are carried out to reduce body dissatisfaction will also become more difficult when individuals make social comparisons to people who are considered better. Doing social comparisons increases the opportunities for women in emerging adulthood to see various shortcomings or negative things from within themselves. On the other hand, when individuals have a positive assessment of themselves when doing social comparisons, they can see various positive things including their physical condition so that body dissatisfaction becomes low. Women in emerging adulthood can be more focused on the various achievements they have experienced, what are their strengths, so that they do not only focus on physical conditions and lower body dissatisfaction.

#### **4.1 Conclusion**

Supporting some of the previous findings, the results of this study show that there is a very significant negative relationship between social comparison and body dissatisfaction. This can be interpreted that the higher the social comparison, the lower the body dissatisfaction.

#### **4.2 Recommendation**

For women in emerging adulthood, they can learn and put more effort into seeing the positive things that they have. It is not only related to physical form, but also relates to the various achievements that have been made. Women in emerging adulthood need to realize that individual achievements or individuals differ from one another so that they are not fully comparable. The findings in this study can serve as a reference for insight for women in emerging adulthood regarding the relationship between making social comparisons or being perfectionism and body dissatisfaction.

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