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## The Impact of Social Media Intensity on Body Dissatisfaction as Mediated by Social Comparison

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**ABSTRACT:** Social media among teenagers leads to problems with body dissatisfaction caused by the intensity of use, which influences teenagers to compare themselves with the ideal self that is shared on the media. The aim of this research is to determine the role of social media user intensity in body dissatisfaction mediated by social comparison. This research is quantitative research with a correlational model. The subjects in the research were 103 young female students from X senior high school in the Sidoarjo. The data collected was analyzed using the linear regression formula and path analysis to test the mediation hypothesis. The results showed that the intensity of social media use was correlated with body dissatisfaction with a significance value of 0.031 ( $P < 0.05$ ). The research also found that there is a role of intensity of social media use on body dissatisfaction mediated by social comparison with a t count value greater than t table  $14.122 > 1.98$ .

**Keywords:** Body Dissatisfaction, Intensity, Social Comparison, Social Media



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## INTRODUCTION

Social media are one of the platforms most frequently accessed by smartphone media users with almost 3 billion users in the world (Cunningham et al., 2021). In Indonesia, in 2020, internet users reached 196.7 million (73.7% of the population) (Harahap & Adeni, 2020). Meanwhile, according to Reportal Data, in 2024, social media users based on age in Indonesia will be as follows: aged 0 to 12 years by 21.3%, 13 to 24 years by 19.8%, 25 to 44 years by 29.9%, 45 to 64 years by 22.2% and over 65 years old 7.1% (Kemp, 2024). According to Sit, Elliott, Wright, Scott, and Hartling (Sit, Elliott, Wright, Scott, & Hartling, 2022) aged 13–24 years, are young users who are at risk of developing mental illness from using social media. Social media allow users to share information more freely by providing a level of anonymity. Although some social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, Facebook) reveal user identities, other platforms allow users to post anonymously, which can be exploited by users and can encourage and facilitate disinhibition in adolescents due to frequent exposure to risky content (O'reilly et al., 2018). Content on social media not only contains positive messages but also allows negative messages which are thought to affect self-esteem and body appreciation differently (Soler, 2022).

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The results of research on young people who use social media show that the problem of body dissatisfaction among young people who use social media is the biggest problem (Vries et al., 2019). According to Cohen, Newton-John, and Slater (Cohen, Newton-John, & Slater, 2021) social media influences teenage users' body dissatisfaction through exposure to content about ideal beauty that is shared. Exposure to social media content related to thin idealism (slim) and idealism (lean-athletic) has more influence on body dissatisfaction in adolescent girls than boys (Castellanos Silva & Steins, 2023; Cohen et al., 2019). This is because teenage girls access highly visual social media, such as Instagram and SnapChat, more often than teenage boys. These photo- and video-based applications center on physical appearance, are consistently accessible to most adolescents, and allow measurement of peer approval (e.g., "likes") (Nesi et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2022) that some young women can measure is interpreted as peer approval (or in some cases, "like," disapproval) of their appearance (Chua & Chang, 2016; Roberts et al., 2022).

Tariq and Ijaz (Tariq & Ijaz, 2015) described body dissatisfaction is the experience of someone who is dissatisfied with their own body image. Body dissatisfaction experienced by a person is a serious condition and can cause other disorders in people who experience it, such as eating disorders, anxiety and depression (Barnes et al., 2020). Body dissatisfaction can be seen from the way people are dissatisfied with body image in 3 aspects, including, body shape and weight, skeletal structure, and facial features (Tariq & Ijaz, 2015).

Previous research has shown that body dissatisfaction variables are influenced by the social media intensity (Lukman, Muis, & Hamid, 2023; Widiastuti, 2017). Research results show that the duration of use of social media such as Facebook and Instagram has been associated with a more negative body image for both adult women and adolescent girls (Marizka, 2019). Empirical study from Yapri and Dewi, (Yapri & Dewi, 2022) on 167 Instagram users aged 19 to 28 years showed that social media intensity in the form of Instagram was positively correlated with body dissatisfaction ( $P=0.000$  and  $R=0.128$ ). Meanwhile, research on 110 women living in Denpasar aged 17 to 22 years also showed a correlation between the intensity of communication on Instagram and body dissatisfaction ( $P=0.003$ ). This is also equivalent to a study from Jarman, Marques, McLean, Slater, & Paxton (Jarman, Marques, McLean, Slater, & Paxton, 2021b) which revealed a correlation between social media intensity and body satisfaction in 1,432 adolescent social media users aged 11 to 17 years ( $P<0.001$  and  $R=-0.13$ ). This research explains that the lower the social media intensity, the higher body satisfaction and conversely, the higher the intensity of social media use, the lower body satisfaction.

Social learning theory seems to be able to explain the correlation between the intensity of social media use and high body dissatisfaction. Teenage girls have learned that the ideal body is how women should look. Therefore, teenage girls compare themselves with models in terms of physical attractiveness shared on social media. This can be detrimental to young women if these young people consider other people to be superior in terms of physical attractiveness, and are less satisfied with their own body condition regarding their own weight, shape and appearance. These people often engage in harmful eating behaviors, such as dieting, restricting eating, overeating, and excessive exercise (Dye & Dye, 2015).

Nayenggita and Adishesa (Nayenggita & Adishesa, 2021) define the intensity of social media use as the average duration using social media in a day. Studies have found that the high intensity of social media use plays a role in the potential for mental disorders and low individual well-being of its users (Boer et al., 2022). This is because teenage female users prefer to compare their bodies with what they see on social media. When there is a mismatch between the two, women may experience dissatisfaction with body image (Lukman et al., 2023) which ultimately threatens the psychological well-being of users (Griffiths et al., 2016). Teenage girls were also found to search more frequently

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for other users' idealized images leading to higher levels of depression over time. Therefore, it can be assumed that different forms of engagement on Instagram have different effects on body dissatisfaction (Pedalino & Camerini, 2022).

Changes in adolescents' assessments of their bodies are largely determined by social experiences. This proves that body image can change and be open to new information. The social environment plays an important role in teenagers' beliefs about the ideal appearance standards they want to have (Ayu & Brahmini, 2019). Based on social comparison theory, the intensity of social media use influences body dissatisfaction through the behavior of comparing oneself with content on social media (Lewallen & Behm-morawitz, 2016). Gibbons and Buunk (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999) defines social comparison as a behavioral tendency to compare abilities and opinions with other people in order to improve performance and self-esteem. When users are continuously exposed to information that shares the ideal body shape conceptualized in society, individuals will begin to compare their body with that ideal body. When there is nothing between the self that one has and the ideal self, the person will re-evaluate satisfaction with the body they have (Yapri & Dewi, 2022). On social media, comparison suggests users compare themselves with other similar people. However, Instagram is changing this by only showing the “best” versions of people. This creates a cycle of “social policing” where users judge other people's posts and their own posts harshly through the behavior of comparing themselves to unrealistic depictions resulting in Instagram users often experiencing increased body dissatisfaction (Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2019).

Previous studies from Jung et al. (Jung, Barron, Lee, & Swami, 2022) on 579 female social media users in the United States of America who found a correlation between the intensity of social media use and body dissatisfaction through social comparison ( $P < 0.05$ ). The same thing was also done by Australian teenagers aged 11 to 17 years, showing a correlation between the intensity of social media use and body satisfaction through social comparison ( $P > 0.05$ ). Intensity of use may not be detrimental to satisfaction on its own, but when users engage with certain activities or content, including appearance-focused content, detrimental effects do emerge. Second, social comparison as the sole mediator between the intensity of social media use and body satisfaction (Jarman et al., 2021b). Other research shows that young people between the ages of 19 and 28 who use social media have body dissatisfaction scores which are influenced by the intensity of social media use through social comparison by 35% ( $P > 0.05$  and  $R = 0.352$ ).

Previous literature shows that body dissatisfaction is related to the intensity of social media use and social comparison has mediated both. Adolescents who are one of the most active social media users in Indonesia have the opportunity to experience body dissatisfaction from exposure to content that is viewed every day. Therefore, researchers use a quantitative correlational research approach aimed to test the correlation between the intensity of social media use and body dissatisfaction in female adolescent users. On the other hand, researchers also try to reveal the role of social comparison behavior as a mediator of the intensity of social media use and body dissatisfaction. The results of this study are expected to be evaluation materials for preventing the emergence of body dissatisfaction in adolescents who use social media and can be used as reference materials for further researchers to reveal more about health in female adolescents who use social media.

## METHOD

The method used in this research is a quantitative method with a correlational type. The researcher chose correlational research because this research model is suitable for seeing the relationship

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between variables. In this study, the researcher wanted to see the relationship between the variable of intensity of social media use and body dissatisfaction through social comparison.

The data obtained in the research was obtained from a scale distribution at one of X senior high school in Sidoarjo. The subjects used in the research were 103 girls who were obtained through simple random sampling. The instruments used in this research consisted of a social comparison and body dissatisfaction scale as well as a social media use intensity questionnaire. The social comparison scale contains 16 items which were developed using the theory of Gibbons and Buunk (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). Another scale, namely body dissatisfaction, contains 24 items which was developed based on Tariq and Ijaz's theory (Tariq & Ijaz, 2015). The scales used use a Likert scale model consisting of Favorable and Unfavorable statements with 4 answer choices "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree". The results of psychometric analysis show that the social comparison and body dissatisfaction scales are valid ( $r > 0.3$ ) and reliable ( $\alpha = 0.896$  and  $0.880$ ). The intensity of social media use instrument was developed through the theory of Nayenggita and Adishesa (Nayenggita & Adishesa, 2021). The research subjects were asked to convey in a questionnaire the intensity of their use of social media, the average duration of accessing social media in a day through the question "In a day, how much time do you spend accessing social media?" with a choice of 4 answers "1-2 hours", "3-4 hours", "4-5 hours" and "more than 5 hours".

The collected data was then analyzed using linear regression analysis and path analysis to test the mediation hypothesis. Linear regression analysis was used to see the relationship between the intensity of social media use and body dissatisfaction. Linear regression analysis was performed using SPSS software. Further analysis, namely path analysis, was used to see the role of social comparison as a mediator in the intensity of social media use and body dissatisfaction.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The subjects used in this research were 103 young women who came from X senior high school in Sidoarjo and used social media. The research subjects had varying ages, namely 15 years as many as 11 people (11%), 16 years as many as 30 people (29%), 17 years as many as 40 people (39%) and 18 years as many as 22 people (21%) who were spread across several grade, namely 1th grade of 39 people (38%), 2nd grade of 25 people (24%) and 3rd grade of 39 people (38%). The research subjects used in the research had various social media accounts, namely 94 people (91%) had TikTok accounts, 102 people (99%) had WhatsApp accounts, 103 people (100%) had Instagram accounts, 70 people (68%) have a Twitter account, 29 people (28%) have a Line account, 13 people (13%) have a Facebook account, and 6 people (6%) have a Quora account and the type of social media most frequently accessed is TikTok numbered 29 people (28%), WhatsApp numbered 48 people (47%), Instagram numbered 17 people (16%) and Twitter numbered 9 people (9%).

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**Table 1.** Sample Description

Criteria		Total	Percentage
Age	15 years	11	11%
	16 years	30	29%
	17 years	40	39%
	18 years	22	21%
Grade	Level 1	39	38%
	Level 2	25	24%
	Level 3	39	38%
Social Media Accounts	TikTok	94	91%
	WhatsApp	102	99%
	Instagram	103	100%
	Twitter	70	68%
	Line	29	28%
	Facebook	13	13%
	Quora	6	6%
Frequently Accessed Social Media	TikTok	29	28%
	WhatsApp	48	47%
	Instagram	17	16%
	Twitter	9	9%

The data distributed is analyzed to see the results of the assumption test to determine the analysis technique used to test the hypothesis. The results of the normality test analysis showed a significance score of 0.492 ( $P > 0.05$ ) with a Kolmogorov-Smirnov score of 0.833. This means that the body dissatisfaction data is normally distributed.

**Table 2.** Normality Test

Variable	Significance	Kolmogrov Smirnov
Body dissatisfaction	0.492	0.833

Another assumption test, the linearity test between the research variables shows that all data has a linearity significance of more than 0.05 ( $P > 0.05$ ). This shows that the data between variables in research is linear.

**Table 3.** Linearity Test

Variable	F score	Significance
Intensity*Body dissatisfaction	1.011	0.368
Intensity*Socail comparison	0.073	0.929
Social comparison*Body dissatisfaction	1.175	0.289

Based on the assumption test, in this research hypothesis testing can be carried out using regression analysis to determine social media intensity with body dissatisfaction and Sobel analysis to see the mediating role of social comparison on social media intensity with body dissatisfaction. The results of hypothesis testing using linear regression analysis on the correlation between social media intensity and body dissatisfaction show that the significance is 0.031 ( $P < 0.05$ ) with an F score of 4.791, t score 2.189, and B coefficient 1.694. This shows that the first research hypothesis which states “*social media intensity is correlated with body dissatisfaction*” has been accepted.

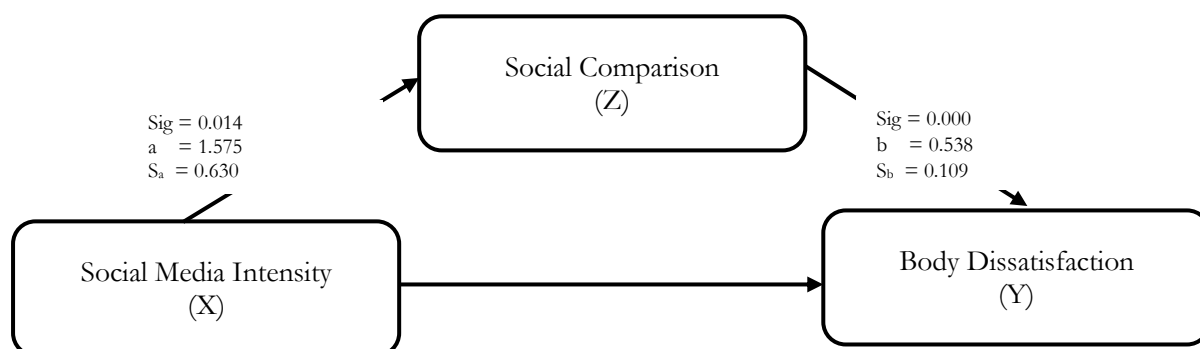
**Table 4.** Linear Regression Test of Intensity with Body Dissatisfaction

Variable	B coefficient	F score	t score	P score
Intensity*Body dissatisfaction	1.694	4.791	2.189	0.031

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Next, regression analysis is carried out to determine the significance score, coefficient B, and standard error between research variables which will be used to test path analysis using the Sobel formula. The results of the analysis on the correlation variable of the intensity of social media use on social comparisons showed a significance score of 0.014 ( $P > 0.05$ ) with a B coefficient of 1.575 and a standard error of 0.630. Meanwhile, the regression analysis test on the correlation variable of social comparison with body dissatisfaction obtained a significance score of 0.000 ( $P > 0.05$ ) with a B coefficient of 0.538 and a standard error of 0.109. Below is a picture of the results of linear regression analysis, the data of which will be used as a path analysis test using the Sobel formula.



**Figure 1.** Regression Test Results between Variables for Path Analysis

The data obtained is then used for path analysis tests using the Sobel formula. The results of the analysis using the Sobel formula are obtained as follows:

$$S_{ab} = \sqrt{b^2sa^2 + a^2sb^2 + sa^2sb^2}$$

$$S_{ab} = \sqrt{0.538^2 \cdot 0.630^2 + 0.014^2 \cdot 0.109^2 + 0.630^2 \cdot 0.109^2}$$

$$S_{ab} = \sqrt{(0.289444)(0.3969) + (0.000196)(0.011881) + (0.3969)(0.011881)}$$

$$S_{ab} = \sqrt{0.114880324 + 0.0000023287 + 0.004715569}$$

$$S_{ab} = \sqrt{0.119598222}$$

$$S_{ab} = 0.059799111$$

$$S_{ab} = 0.060$$

$$t = \frac{ab}{S_{ab}}$$

$$t = \frac{1.575 \times 0.538}{0.060}$$

$$t = \frac{0.84735}{0.060}$$

$$t = 14.1225$$

$$t = 14.122$$

$$t_{\text{count}} > t_{\text{table}} = 14.122 > 1.98$$

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Based on the results of the Sobel analysis, a standard error score of 0.060 was obtained with a  $t_{count}$  value greater than  $t_{table}$   $14.122 > 1.98$ . This means that the second research hypothesis which states “*social media intensity is correlated with body dissatisfaction through social comparison*” has been accepted.

The results of research on the correlation between the intensity of social media use and body dissatisfaction are in line with previous research (Ayu & Brahmini, 2019; Marizka et al., 2019; Yapri & Dewi, 2022). Research results from Maimunah and Yohana in 2021 revealed that the higher the intensity of social media use, the higher a person's tendency to experience body dissatisfaction. Intensity of social media use contributes 2.8% to body dissatisfaction (Candra et al., 2023; Maimunah & Satwika, 2021). Intensity involving the duration and frequency of social media use (Ayu & Brahmini, 2019; Nayenggita & Adishesha, 2021) will show the amount of exposure showing the body shape that according to socio-cultural society considers the “ideal” body (Mingoia et al., 2017; Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019). Users then internalize the things they gain through exposure to content related to the ideal body that has been depicted in the media. These internalized ideals can be problematic because media content often does not reflect reality with many forms of mass media disseminating incomplete, inaccurate and biased content so that it becomes the standard for judging oneself and others (Mingoia et al., 2017). When these beauty ideals become important (but almost never attainable) women may experience negative body image (Veldhuis et al., 2018) which ultimately leads to the emergence of body dissatisfaction (Mingoia et al., 2017).

Research also supports previous studies regarding the role of social comparison as a moderator in the intensity of social media use and body dissatisfaction (Jarman et al., 2021a; Jung et al., 2022; Pedalino & Camerini, 2022). According to social comparison theory, people are more likely to make comparisons with similar others because these comparisons are more relevant and can provide more effective evaluative information. Therefore, social media may be more detrimental to body image than traditional media because of the social comparison that allows users to do so (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019). The results of previous studies found that social media platforms such as Facebook allow users to experience body dissatisfaction after 4 weeks of use (Mingoia et al., 2017; Smith, Hames, & Joiner Jr, 2013). The more frequently individuals access social media, the higher the frequency of comparing one's physical appearance with the appearance of people they follow on social media, which ultimately gives rise to body dissatisfaction. This means that the more users compare themselves with images on social media, the greater their body dissatisfaction and the desire to have a body that matches the images on social media (Jiotsa et al., 2021).

This study has limitations, namely that the research subjects are limited to one gender. In fact, it is important to conduct research involving both genders to see the role of intensity of social media use and social comparison on body dissatisfaction from two different subject attributes. Previous researchers also mentioned that body dissatisfaction in male adolescents may occur even though the prevalence and proposition are different from female adolescents (Mahon & Hevey, 2021; Modica, 2020). In addition, the age of the research subjects also needs to be expanded. Previous studies have shown differences in body dissatisfaction in adolescent and early adult subjects (Jiotsa et al., 2021; Tiggemann et al., 2018). Thus, it is important to conduct research on the intensity of social media use, social comparison and body dissatisfaction in male and female genders and in various age ranges so that the research results can be more generalized.

## CONCLUSION

This research measures body dissatisfaction in female users who are teenager and social media users. The research results show a correlation between the intensity of social media use and body

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dissatisfaction as well as the mediating role of social comparison between intensity and body dissatisfaction. This research shows the importance of limiting the use of social media because it can affect the mental health of users, which in this case leads to the emergence of body dissatisfaction. Users who use social media intensively have been shown to compare their bodies more with images related to ideal bodies shared on social media.

Researchers recommend that adolescent social media users be wiser in limiting the use of social media in their daily activities. Social media platform developers can also play a role in creating stricter regulations regarding social media content aimed at teenagers. On the other hand, researchers also recognize the importance of cross-sector collaboration between families, schools, and the government to create an environment that supports adolescent mental health and well-being. Thus, the problem of body dissatisfaction in adolescent social media users due to intensity of use and comparative behavior with other users can be prevented.

Researchers also suggest that other researchers conduct further research with a more diverse population and use more complex methods to uncover other factors that may influence the relationship between research variables. This is because in this study, researchers only focused on the relationship between the intensity of social media use, social comparison, and body dissatisfaction. Other factors that can cause body dissatisfaction, such as social factors, were not examined in this study. In addition, the sample of this study was limited to female adolescents in high schools in Sidoarjo. Thus, research with more diverse samples, such as from various countries and genders, needs to be conducted to increase the generalizability of the research results.

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