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The Influence of Consumerism Values and Body Ideal Internalization on Body Image in Young Adult Women: A Systematic Review

Tarisa Indra Dewi, Muhammad Salis Yuniardi, Yuni Nurhamida
Master of Psychology, Muhammadiyah University of Malang, Malang, Indonesia

Article info

Corresponding Author:

Tarisa Indra Dewi
tarisaindradewi@website.umm.ac.id
Muhammadiyah University of Malang, Malang, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Body image is a complex psychological phenomenon vulnerable to the influence of modern consumer culture. This systematic review aims to identify and synthesize variables of consumerism values affecting body image in young adult women (aged 18–25 years). Literature searches were conducted using Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, PubMed Central, and DOAJ databases with inclusion criteria: quantitative empirical research, female samples aged 18–35 years, measurement of body image and consumerism values, publications from 2008–2024. Twelve verified studies were analyzed using the PEOS framework and PRISMA 2020 diagram. Synthesis results identified three primary mechanisms: (1) materialism and endorsement of material values predict body dissatisfaction through self-objectification; (2) social media and influencers serve as transmission channels for body-perfect ideals via upward social comparison; (3) consumer behavior creates a cycle of body dissatisfaction and body modification consumption. In conclusion, consumerism values significantly influence body image through internalization of idealistic appearance standards and self-objectification. Recommendations include media literacy, regulation of influencer marketing, and longitudinal research on Indonesian populations.

Keywords: *Body Image, Body Ideal Internalization; Consumerism, Self-Objectification, Young Adult Women.*

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INTROUCTION

Body image is a multidimensional construct encompassing an individual's perceptions, evaluations, and attitudes toward their physical body (Cash, 2002). The body image experience is highly complex, involving cognitive, affective, behavioral, and perceptual dimensions. Over the past two decades, research has shown a significant increase in body dissatisfaction among young women, particularly those aged 18–25 years emerging adulthood phase that is particularly vulnerable to the influences of the social and cultural environment (Arnett, 2000).

One crucial environmental factor influencing body image is consumer culture. Dittmar (2008), through the Consumer Culture Impact Model (CCI Model), explains that modern consumer culture projects two main ideals: (1) the body-perfect ideal, which is communicated through idealized and often unrealistic media images, and (2) the

material good life ideal, which emphasizes the importance of material possessions and consumption as symbols of social status and self-identity. These two ideals reinforce each other, creating an environment where body appearance and material consumption become closely intertwined.

Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) supports this understanding, suggesting that when women internalize idealized appearance standards, they tend to engage in self-objectification viewing their bodies as objects to be evaluated based on external appearance. The psychological mechanisms linking consumerism to body dissatisfaction include social comparison (Festinger, 1954), upward social comparison with idealized media models, body surveillance, body shame, and the internalization of the body-perfect ideal.

In the digital era, social media platforms such as Instagram serve as the primary channel for transmitting consumerist values and idealized appearance standards through content from influencers, advertisements, and peer posts. Repeated exposure to such content increases the frequency of upward social comparisons, which are consistently linked to decreased body satisfaction.

Available empirical research demonstrates a consistent relationship between consumerist values (materialism, consumerist social media use, social comparison) and body image dissatisfaction. However, systematic and comprehensive reviews discussing which specific consumerist value variables affect body image dimensions—particularly among young adult female populations remain scarce.

Based on this gap, this systematic review aims to identify, analyze, and synthesize current research findings regarding the relationship between consumerist values and body image in young adult women. This review is expected to provide valuable insights into the specific consumerist value variables that need to be addressed in efforts to maintain psychological health related to body image, thereby benefiting academics and mental health practitioners, as well as serving as a foundation for future research.

METHOD

This systematic review follows an eight-stage process: (1) topic identification and research question formulation, (2) planning and establishment of inclusion and exclusion criteria, (3) comprehensive literature search using multiple databases, (4) study selection and data extraction, (5) quality and validity verification of sources, (6) analysis and synthesis of findings, (7) interpretation of results, and (8) reporting in accordance with PRISMA 2020 standards.

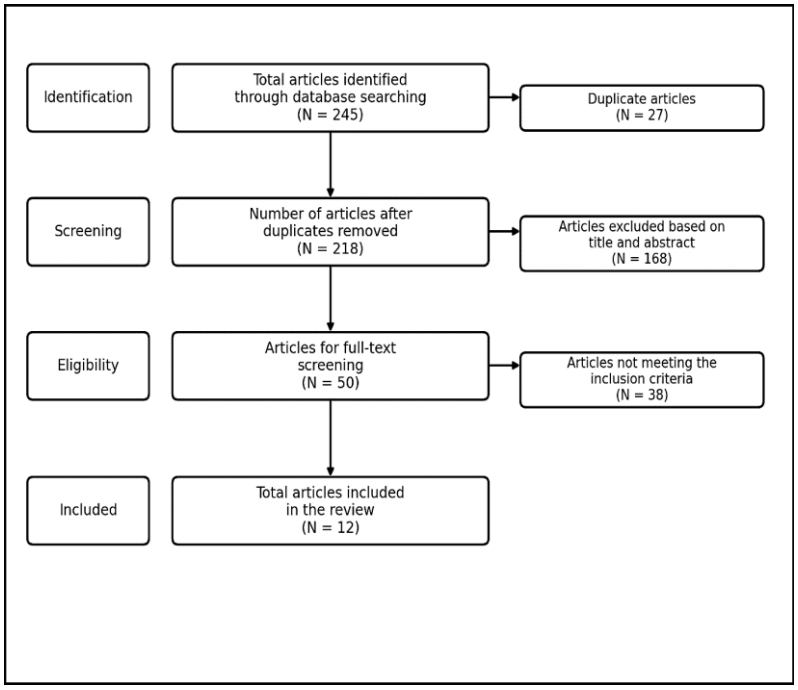
The review planning began with formulating the research question using the PEOS framework (Population, Exposure/Variable, Outcome, Study Design). The population in this review comprises young adult women aged 18–25 years, without geographical restrictions, although priority was given to the Indonesian and Southeast Asian contexts. The exposure or variables examined include (a) materialism and endorsement of material values, (b) social media consumption (Instagram, social media engagement), (c) internalization of the body-perfect ideal through media and advertising, (d) attachment to influencers, and (e) consumer behavior. The outcome focus is body image, encompassing body dissatisfaction, body appreciation, self-objectification, body surveillance, body shame, appearance anxiety, and the internalization of beauty

standards. The study designs included are quantitative research utilizing correlational, cross-sectional, longitudinal, or experimental designs.

The authors subsequently determined search terms and designed the search protocol using a Boolean strategy with keyword combinations: (body image OR body dissatisfaction OR self-objectification) AND (consumerism OR materialism OR social media OR instagram) AND (women OR female OR young adult) AND (body image ideal OR appearance). These search terms were used to search for articles across the Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, PubMed Central, DOAJ, and SINTA Garuda databases.

In the subsequent stage, all identified journals were checked for duplicates, screened based on title and abstract, and analyzed using the full-text versions. Following the selection process from 245 records retrieved, 12 verified studies discussing the impact of consumerist values on body image in young adult women were obtained. The flow diagram of the journal selection process is shown in Figure 1. The authors established specific parameters for inclusion in this review: (1) quantitative empirical research, (2) a sample of women aged 18–35 years with a primary focus on ages 18–25, (3) measurement of body image and at least one consumerist value variable, (4) publications from 2008–2024, and (5) full text available in English or Indonesian. Exclusion criteria were: (1) purely qualitative studies, (2) populations with diagnosed medical or psychiatric conditions, (3) case report studies, and (4) review articles lacking new empirical data.

PRISMA Table for the Journal Selection Process



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The systematic extraction of data from the 12 primary quantitative studies yielded critical insights into the operational mechanisms linking consumerism with body image degradation. Materialism and intensive exposure to appearance-focused Instagram

influencers emerged as the most robust and highly replicated predictors of body dissatisfaction across multiple distinct demographic populations. The comprehensive synthesis of these variables, subjects, and specific body image outcomes is detailed sequentially in Table 1.

Table 1. List of Consumerism Value Variables Influencing Body Image in Early Adult Women

No	Author & Year	Subjects	Consumerism Variables	Body Image Outcomes
1	Guðnadóttir & Garðarsdottir (2014)	Danish women aged 18–21 (n=303)	Materialism; internalization of body-perfect ideal	Body dissatisfaction; body-shaping behaviors
2	Sun (2018)	Chinese female college students (n=583)	Materialism (endorsement of material values)	Body dissatisfaction; body shame; body surveillance
3	Felix (2012)	Adult female consumers (Study 1 & 2)	Materialism (importance of material ownership)	Body appearance importance; Internalization of beauty standards
4	Pedalino & Camerini (2022)	Italian women aged 18–25 (n=291)	Instagram browsing; upward comparison with influencers	Body appreciation; body image discrepancy
5	Bocci Benucci et al. (2024)	Italian women; n=5060 (M=35.33 yrs)	Following Instagram influencers (nutrition, fitness, entertainment)	Body dissatisfaction; eating disorder symptoms
6	Prichard, Taylor, & Tiggemann (2023)	Australian young women (emerging adulthood)	Instagram influencer sexualized imagery; appearance comparison	Body dissatisfaction; negative mood; self-objectification
7	Ashikali & Dittmar (2012)	British women (Experimental, n=155)	Priming materialisme + thin-ideal media exposure	State body dissatisfaction; appearance concerns
8	Hollett et al. (2023)	Female consumers (n=113)	Online apparel shopping (activewear vs casualwear)	Self-objectification; body gaze behavior;

				appearance attitudes
9	Casale et al. (2019)	Young Adults (Experimental, n= 130)	Repeated exposure to appearance-focused Instagram accounts	Body dissatisfaction; appearance-based self-worth investment
10	Tiggemann, M., Anderberg, I., & Brown, Z. (2020)	Young adults (Social media users)	Social media content creation & consumption; selfies	Self-objectification; body surveillance; appearance focus
11	Grabe, Ward, & Hyde (2008) [Meta-analysis]	Multiple populations (Meta-analysis)	Media exposure (magazines, TV, advertising)	Body dissatisfaction (Moderate effect size d = 0.41)
12	Harper & Tiggemann (2008)	Female undergraduates (Experimental)	Fashion magazine images exposure; advertising models	State self-objectification; body dissatisfaction

DISCUSSION

In this review, body image is conceptualized as a multidimensional psychological experience encompassing four dimensions: (1) the perceptual dimension, which refers to the accuracy of perception regarding body shape and size; (2) the evaluative dimension, which involves appraisal as well as satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the body; (3) the affective dimension, which includes negative emotions and feelings such as shame and anxiety related to appearance; and (4) the behavioral dimension, which comprises surveillance, body checking, and appearance-avoidance behaviors.

The emerging adulthood phase (aged 18–25 years) represents a critical period for body image, characterized by late identity formation, independence from family, maximum exposure to peer norms and social media, and a heightened sensitivity to social comparison (Arnett, 2000). Within the context of modern consumer culture, body image during this phase is intrinsically linked to material consumption, wherein the ideal body becomes a commodity traded through the beauty, fashion, and wellness industries.

Table 1 displays several consumerist value variables that influence body image in young adult women. Materialism and exposure to Instagram/influencers are the two most widely researched variables, each identified across multiple studies among the twelve analyzed. Other identified variables include materialism priming combined with thin-ideal media exposure (Ashikali & Dittmar, 2012), online apparel shopping (Hollett et al., 2023), and general media exposure identified through a meta-analysis (Grabe et al., 2008) and a fashion magazine experiment (Harper & Tiggemann, 2008). This indicates that consumerist values, whether in the form of value orientations (materialism) or their transmission channels (social media and advertising), serve as consistent predictors of body dissatisfaction.

Research by Guðnadóttir and Garðarsdóttir (2014) as well as Sun (2018) consistently revealed that endorsement of materialistic values which emphasize the importance of material possessions and social status predicts body dissatisfaction more strongly than other demographic factors. Mechanistically, individuals with high materialistic values internalize the body-perfect ideal as a means to achieve social status and acceptance, thereby treating the body as a commodity to be curated and optimized. Self-objectification serves as a key mediator between materialism and body dissatisfaction (Sun, 2018).

Recent studies (Pedalino & Camerini, 2022; Bocci Benucci et al., 2024; Prichard et al., 2023) indicate that Instagram and influencers serve as the dominant platforms for transmitting consumerist values and body ideals. Pedalino and Camerini (2022) found that the intensity of Instagram browsing was mediated by upward social comparison specifically with influencers rather than peers resulting in lower body appreciation. Bocci Benucci et al. (2024) specifically identified nutrition and fitness influencers as the strongest predictors of eating disorder symptoms and body dissatisfaction compared to entertainment influencers. Influencer content generally combines three elements: body objectification through sexualized or fitness-focused imagery, endorsement of consumer products such as supplements, skincare, and activewear, and the promotion of lifestyle goals intrinsic to consumerism.

Research by Hollett et al. (2023) and Felix (2012) revealed a reciprocal relationship, wherein consumerism-driven body dissatisfaction prompts further consumer behavior to modify the body for example, through diet products, fitness memberships, cosmetics, and apparel. Hollett et al. (2023) demonstrated that body-oriented online apparel shopping predicts higher self-objectification and lower appearance satisfaction, creating a cycle from body image idealization to body dissatisfaction, consumption for body modification, and back to heightened self-objectification. This cycle is further reinforced by social media algorithms that personalize content based on user browsing behavior, thereby creating an echo chamber of consumerist values.

Overall, consumerist values influence body image through pathways of ideal appearance standard internalization and self-objectification. These three mechanisms materialism, social media and influencer marketing, and reciprocal consumer behaviour are interconnected and mutually reinforcing in shaping the experience of body dissatisfaction among young adult women.

CONCLUSION

Body image in early adult women is influenced by several consumerist values, including materialism, consumption of social media and influencer content, the internalization of an "ideal" body standard, and consumptive behavior. Materialism and exposure to Instagram or influencers emerge as the most frequently examined predictors in this review. In general, consumerist values affect body image through the internalization of idealized appearance standards and self-objectification—processes that ultimately lead to body dissatisfaction, body shame, and further consumptive behavior. These findings offer a basis for academics, mental health practitioners, and policymakers to design prevention and intervention programs focused on body image among early adult women.

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