

The Role of Photo Editing in Instagram Towards the Body Image Among Female Teenagers

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Abstract

The use of social media among teenagers, such as Instagram, has influenced how they perceive their own bodies. This study aimed to find out the role of photo editing among female teenagers in affecting their body image. The study has applied a descriptive qualitative approach. The data were collected through interviews with the selected informants, i.e. female teenagers in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, that using Instagram and photo editing applications, with a range of age 12-18 years old. This study finds that the most important motivation for sharing the photos is showing the best of body image according to certain socially constructed standards. Some teenagers have positive self-concept and are more confident in sharing their photos without any editing processes. While some others feel dissatisfaction with their body image, find insecure and afraid of negative comments, and in turn need to edit their photos before uploading to Instagram.

Keywords: *body image, female teenager, photo editing, insecure, Instagram.*

Introduction

Kuss & Griffiths (2011) stated that the use of social media has become an increasingly popular in everyday life in recent years. Technological developments are more sophisticated time after time. Thus, many applications are emerging as a result of very rapid technological developments. The newest survey found that the time people spend on social media globally has increased by an average of almost 60% over the past seven years (BBC News, 2019). In 2019, Indonesia placed as 6th place of the most 'social media' countries according to GlobalWebIndex.

Social media consists of two words: 'social' and 'media', means communications (Laughey, 2007; McQuail, 2003). Whereas the word 'social' is described as a social reality in which each person takes action which contributes to society. One of the most favorite social media in Indonesia is Instagram which was created in 2010 and purchased in 2012 by Facebook. There are various features on Instagram, such as posting feeds, Instagram Stories, hashtags, direct messages, live and many others. Based on the survey shows that users aged 18-24 are the largest age group of Instagram users in Indonesia, with a total

percentage of 37.3 percent or around 23 million users (KOMPAS.com, 2019). The use of Instagram for sharing photos and videos of personal life make many people compare them to the other's life such as beauty, fashion and so on. It has caused many researchers to begin looking at possible connections between the two and whether social media is influencing the way people view their bodies, especially women, and whether it is causing them to develop negative body image or eating disorders (Klein 2013).

Body image is an impact of sharing our life on Instagram. Arthur (2010) stated that body image is a subjective imagination that someone has about her body. Specifically it is related to other people's judgment, and how well his body has to be adjusted with these perceptions. Many things can affect body image such as the effect of weight and fat - thin perception, culture, life cycle, pregnancy, socialization, concepts self, role of gender, effect of distortion of body image on the individual (Thompson, 2000).

There are several studies that have been done regarding body image. Sukamto's research (2018), for example, found that activities of the participants frequently engaged in, such as uploading photos, viewing other people's photos, following friends or Instagram celebrities, stimulated them to make upward appearance comparisons and more likely to cause negative body image, even though there were participants who still had. Research conducted by Kleemans (2018), concluded that girls with a higher tendency to make social comparisons had a lower body image in general, and especially after exposure to the manipulated Instagram photos. Fox & Vendernia (2016) analyzed the relationship of body image of teenagers towards Instagram users in Yogyakarta, DKI Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya. Quantitative methods were applied in this study which concluded 235 teenagers in the range 15-18 years old. The results of the study

show that the higher online social support through Instagram obtained by teenagers, the higher also the level of body image possessed teenagers, vice versa.

This study was conducted to answer the question of how photo editing applications which have been heavily invested in the face beauty trend taking its role on the body image among teenagers which are using Instagram in Yogyakarta. As an example, Facetune is an application that owes its incredible success as a photo editing application which provides only a few of the most important skin smoothing and reshaping tools. Facetune works in a way to change the shape of their eyes, eyebrows, nose or even distort their skin tones by widening their waists by only clicking the symbol on the application. People want to look like the image that the culture developed based on beauty standards. It has become a problem that causes confusion among psychologists. Furthermore, it could potentially harm the trust of teenagers and young women because of self-pressure and the unconscious expectation of what those photos do to their self-esteem, without coming off as a bit of a hockey, or at least exhausted.

Method

The method used in this study is descriptive with qualitative approach form. As the opinion put forward by Bogdan and Taylor who mentioned qualitative methods' as a research process which generated descriptive data in the form of people's spoken and written words and observable behavior. Descriptions data may be used for various special contexts and for different natural processes. Qualitative research is characterized by a variety of methods as the subject of attention, including interpretive and naturalistic approaches to the object of analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (2009) argued that

the term 'qualitative' defines the purpose and meaning of the method being studied.

Research data were collected through interviews. Interviews were conducted with several respondents by compiling a series of questions that discussed the subject of research. Respondents are teenagers in Yogyakarta with a range of age 12-18 years old women that are using Instagram and photo editing applications. Selected speakers are women because of the tendency to upload photos to social media for women because women pay more attention to their physical appearance so that they tend to share photos online compared to men (Stefanoe, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2011; Haferkamp, Eimler, Papadakis, & Kruck, 2012 in Nguyen, 2014: 2). Using the transcript process, the answers obtained from the interview will be translated into written form after the interview.

First, the collected data will be analyzed using the coding process, implemented based on the theme and sub-themes of each question found in the study and interview questions. The data must be sorted, grouped into definitions to form study themes and formulate hypotheses. In the next stage, the collected data will be rearranged through the method of presentation of the data. The data presented may be organized in the form of text with paragraphs and script. The data presentation process is performed to make the data presented in the research report more coherent and easier to understand. Eventually, conclusions will be drawn from the submitted results. This process is done after the data has been precisely sorted in order to find the significance of the collected data.

Results and Discussions

Based on the results of interviews conducted with four teenage girls, with the same characteristics: 12-18 years old; active on Instagram (upload photo or liked and comment on someone else picture); using photo editing application; and concern with their body image, the result can be explained as follows.

On the range 12-18 years old, the average of them said that they are insecure for themselves which makes them using photo editing applications. However, photo editing which they usually do only uses filter grid photos. Standard of uploading photos on their social media does not have to have a slim body, and fair skin. Most of them are satisfied with what they have in physical terms. Also, they are not concerned with negative comments from people on their posts. However, there are some artists who according to them can be used as role models or become the standard of beauty of women. Which indirectly forms a body image view for them. So that it causes a sense of insecurity begins to appear on them.

In the interviews that researchers have conducted, it was found that teenagers feel satisfying when the picture is edited. Most of them edit on the brightness of the photo. They usually feel not confident to upload it before the editing process is done. Otherwise, after doing editing, they feel more confident. As stated by informant 3, "Without editing, (they) feel lack of confident. Thus, in most of my Instagram photos, I edit it all...At least I do cropping and adding filters (on the photo). After editing, it feels better to upload rather than not (doing) editing at all". At a certain point, worry arises out of fear of bad comments from followers on Instagram. Although the informants stated that they do not really care about bad comments on Instagram, however the truth is not so. As mentioned by informant 2, the occasional

insecurity can be swept away by the fact that she is well known by her followers. Therefore, according to him, there is no need to worry too much because the followers already know the real situation. So, image manipulation in the form of photo editing becomes less meaningful. However, in situations where followers don't know much or because body perceptions are too negative, it will encourage teenagers to use photo editing consistently.

On the other hand, the way they see body image usually is affected by their celebrity crush. Most of Indonesian celebrities have the beauty standard in Indonesian people. They

have an ideal shape of body (they are not too fat or too slight), having a fair skin, tall, nice sharp nose, and good looking. It affects the way they see body image on themselves indirectly. They revealed some of their friends on social media use photo editing to shape their nose and their body to be perfect on social media. Commenting on these cases, teenagers who have been interviewed said that they did not like the way someone else edited their photo and made the differences with the real them. However, they don't take it seriously when commenting about other people's photo editing.



Figure 1. Screenshots of the Instagram comment section

Researchers also did observation to the Instagram pages of teenagers who are using photo editing applications as it is shown on the image above. According to the observation, the person who is using a photo editing application and uploading it to social media gets so many interactions and recognition from her followers. The person is a female teenager. She made her skin tone color more clear, white or bright, and smooth. She does not upload their selfies to Instagram for no reasons, but she wants to know about how many people are going to give attention or like and comment on her photos. Hope to get some recognition as response from the other users, make them always try so hard to make an attractive photo. Thus, she is using features on photo editing applications.

The response that she got from her followers mostly showed that the followers love all of her photos by saying it with love emoji or straightly say that she is beautiful. In between all of the comments, there is an interesting comment from her follower on one of her photos which says that "*insecure akutub*". This comment indicates that the follower feels insecure about her body image after seeing the edited photo that she uploaded.

In this observation, the person who uploaded the photo to her Instagram is feeling the anxiety that if she does not use any features to make her appearance looks interesting for her followers to get the attention. In the other words, it is decreasing her confidence. Thus, she manipulates it by using photo editing applications to smooth her skin and make her skin look brighter or white in order to get many likes and comments that indicate she is being recognized by the followers. Moreover, she felt obsessed with pictures that were good as she wished. This is not great for adolescent personality growth.

Natalia (2014) stated that the effect of the photo itself is harmful to the individual who does it and to others. Confidence tends to decrease when the photo to be posted looks less pleasant. If too often editing photos and editing too much like changing body shape or facial details it will lead to body dysmorphic disorder. BDD is included in the obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), reported by *Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia* on Jeda.id. Patients tend to be excessively nervous. He wonders whether his body does have anything wrong. It is increasing anxiety and decreasing confidence in oneself. Users who are technology-addicted and obsessed with uploading photos to social media need to undergo OCD and Body Dysmorphic Disorder therapy (excessive personal-appearance anxiety).

To some teenagers it is normal to edit photos. Not something odd or unusual when a photo is edited within reasonable limits, and in fact almost all users of social media feel more comfortable after editing their images. But that can be addictive too. As quoted from Jeda.id, if too often editing photos and editing too much like changing body shape or facial details it will lead to body dysmorphic disorder. BDD affects more teenagers aged 12 or 13 years. It is estimated that body dysmorphic disorder can affect 1.7% -2.4% of adolescents (Putri and Hsan, 2019).

The research ultimately strengthens previous studies, especially regarding the role of other people in influencing the way adolescents perceive themselves. Burn's study (1993) shows that this causes young women to become less confident, young women always judge themselves through the eyes of other people, namely their friends. Starting with physical appearance, adolescents begin to give an image and perception of the physical form they have, then move on to the physical appearance that

others have to the body standards that every woman must-have. This description and perception of physical appearance are called body image.

Negative body image arises when there is a discrepancy or difference between the individual's perception of his/her body and his/her preferred body, and this difference is considered important. Thus, the social media users especially for adolescents (begins around the age of 10 to 13 years and ends around the age of 18 to 22 years) tend to change the body or avoid criticism from others by editing their physical looks. Santrock (2007) stated because the emotions are still unstable and they are trying to find identity by following the views of others. Therefore they are using a photo editing application.

Conclusion

Teenagers who have used photo editing applications have a variety of reasons when using the application, but the most important reason and motivation is because they want to show the best physical features of body image according to the standards they want. In order to get a great recognition of their physical beauties. This can be seen from the features of the application they use for photo editing.

There are interesting findings that the results show that some teenagers are more confident in the beauty or physical image they have when uploading photos to Instagram and there is no need to change their skin tone or body shape, so it is expressed that they have a good self-concept. But on the other side, there are also teens looking for followers recognition of their physicality so they need a photo editing application to change parts of their bodies. The study revealed that the teenage users of the photo editing application could not respect themselves and in their minds there was always a feeling of dissatisfaction with their physical body image or beauty.

Socially, the experiences mentioned by the informants in this study can be a good reference for the society to be able to recognize and embrace themselves in their healthy body image, particularly for the teenagers. So that later on, when editing photos with applications and uploading it to Instagram they can achieve happiness in themselves without being overwhelmed by the standard of appearance or body goals that the society has defined. For example, to prevent OCD and *Body Dysmorphic Disorder* also plays a significant role in preserving mental health.

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