

OBSESSION WITH KOREAN BEAUTY STANDARD: ITS ROLE IN CAUSING BODY DISSATISFACTION AND EXCESSIVE SKINCARE BUYING

Stephanie Natasya¹, Kristoforus Nugrahanto² & Sri Tiatri³

¹Faculty of Psychology, University Tarumanagara Jakarta
Email: stephanie.705200101@stu.untar.ac.id

²Faculty of Psychology, University Tarumanagara Jakarta
Email: kristoforus.705200139@stu.untar.ac.id

³Faculty of Psychology, University Tarumanagara Jakarta
Email: sri.tiatri@stu.untar.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The rapid globalization makes cultural exchange easier. The society quickly absorbed and adapted the foreign products and cultures. Korean culture is one of them. Korean culture has become one of the main trends in Asia, not least in Indonesia. Youthful and healthy skin are one of the most dominant aspects of Korean celebrities. That aspect becomes the main impetus for fans to link Korean celebrities' appearance to Korean skincare. In fact, most of the cosmetic industry is based on the insecurities we feel about our own faces, skin, and bodies, especially women. They are willing to spend hours applying various cosmetic and beauty products, in order to maintain a beautiful appearance, believing that cosmetics will make a big difference in their lives. In fact, those products can never fully fulfill what they want. This finally leads to further psychological impact, namely body dissatisfaction. The purpose of this study is to examine how much the percentage of obsession with Korean beauty standards plays a role in causing body dissatisfaction. In addition, the researcher added, how much that leads to excessive skincare buying, and what type of beauty product is their preference. Participants are teenagers with an age range of 18-24 years. The method used is a quantitative method, by distributing questionnaires through social media and offline. Participants were 205 female adolescents at the age between 18-24. The method used is quantitative method, by distributing questionnaires through social media and offline. Data were processed using SPSS and analyzed using linear regression. The results showed that obsession with Korean beauty standards contributed 57.6% in causing body dissatisfaction, and 3.1% in causing excessive skincare buying behavior. Beauty products that dominate participants' preferences are Korean skincare products (42.4%).

Keywords: *Beauty, beauty standard, body dissatisfaction, excessive skincare buying, korean wave.*

1. PREFACE

In today's world, it is an undeniable reality that beauty wields significant influence. As Nahai (2018) aptly points out, beauty is often equated with power. Tu et al. (2021) from the University of Buffalo conducted research that unveiled the significant advantage attractive individuals possess in terms of securing employment and advancing their careers. It was stated that attractive individuals are not only more likely to secure job offers but also receive enhanced evaluations and even command higher salaries. Rhodes et al. (2005) found that individuals regarded as beautiful also tend to experience more favorable outcomes in their romantic relationships. This implies the existence of a phenomenon commonly referred to as the "beauty premium," also recognized as "beauty standards," as delineated by Mobius and Rosenblat in Kelly (2021).

Beauty standards are certain physical characteristics that are accepted by society as beautiful and attractive (Dolan, 2021). Beauty standards are shaped by society, and serve as a delineation of the physical attractiveness that every woman must have in order to be liked and considered attractive (Mariyam, 2020). It is a socially constructed concept, often perpetuated by media and advertising, defining a standard for the 'ideal body' or the 'body one should aspire to have' (Bazaga & Alcón, 2018). Women's bodies are more prone to be viewed in an evaluative and

objective way (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Research in anthropology shows that beauty is a concept found in all cultures, but its interpretation may vary across different societies (Kara & Özgür 2023; Sisti et al., 2021).

With the advent of globalization, cultural exchange between countries has become easier. The incursion of foreign products and cultures has made foreign cultures absorbed and adapted by society (Lee et al., 2020). Korean culture has become one of the main trends in Asia (Tjoe & Tae, 2016), not least in Indonesia (Jeong et al., 2017). Korean celebrities have been idolized by a large number of fans around the world, most notably because of their attractive appearance (Lee et al., 2020). One of the dominating aspects regarding the appearance of Korean celebrities is their youthful and healthy skin. This aspect is the catalyst for fans to connect Korean skincare products with the celebrities' coveted looks (Halim & Kiatkawsin, 2021). Reporting from Liputan6 news in 2021, Indonesia even ranks as the 4th largest Korean Wave fan in the world (Liputan6.com, 2021). This shows how Indonesia has a great engagement to Korean Wave.

As a matter of fact, a large part of the cosmetic industry is based on the insecurities we have about our faces, skin, and bodies (Wellisch, 2022). These industries are exploiting the insecurities we feel, especially in women (Cutler, 2021), and benefit massively from consumers' dissatisfaction with their own selves. They massively propagate something that is practically impossible to achieve, not to mention highly unrealistic. The study of Trampe et al. (2011) has found that commercials for beauty enhancing products appear to make consumers feel that their current level of beauty is different than it should be. Women have been spending tens of millions of dollars every week to temporarily change their hair, skin and eye color. They invest hours applying various cosmetics and beauty products, in order to maintain a beautiful appearance, with the belief that cosmetics will make a big difference in their quality of life. In reality, these products can never fully fulfill what they fantasize about (Maine & Kelly, 2005). This inevitably leads to a further psychological impact on the beholder, namely body dissatisfaction (Mariyam, 2020).

Grogan (2021) states that body dissatisfaction, henceforth shortened to BD, is an individual's negative thoughts and feelings about his or her body, where body dissatisfaction is associated with a distorted evaluation of body size, shape and weight, and is often linked to the perceived difference between his or her current body condition and the body he or she considers ideal. Individuals who have BD have a great sense of discomfort with their current body condition. They assume that their current body shape is not perfect, and they want a different body shape (Andini, 2020). Research from Thompson et al. (1999), states that one of the primary causes of BD is the individual's perception that he/she fails to achieve the sociocultural norms regarding idealized body appearance. On a global scale, BD is acknowledged as the most important source of body-related stress (Quittkat et al., 2019). Frederick et al. (in Quittkat et al., 2019) have shown that 20% to 40% of women are dissatisfied with their bodies. This number is higher than men, who have a percentage of 10% to 30%. This shows that BD is more common in women.

The BD phenomenon can be found all around, which can be seen from posts on social media. Social media provides an opportunity for users to curate photos of themselves, select photos that show themselves in the best condition, and further edit them to give more attractiveness (for example, applying filters to make the face look flawless) (Bradley et al., 2020). Studies have also shown that the biggest predictor of one's interest in plastic surgery is BD (Furnham & Levitas, 2012). "I want to be anorexic for a week or two so that I can lose weight" has become a normal line of conversation among women. Ironically, even some actresses and models admitted that

they have body dysmorphic disorder, regardless of how perfect their bodies look to society. Even women who meet today's definition of beauty often do not feel beautiful (Maine & Kelly, 2005). Adolescence is the age range most closely connected to the media. Adolescence is also a time when physical, cognitive, and psychosocial conditions are undergoing changes (Papalia et al., 2009). Adolescence, especially for women, is the age range most prone to have a negative view of body image, or dissatisfaction with several aspects of their appearance (Bradley et al., 2020). Adolescent women who are in the developmental stage of puberty are often susceptible to being dissatisfied with their appearance (Papalia et al., 2009). Research from Dion et al. (2015), found that BD is most prevalent during adolescence. It is approximated that 49% to 84% of adolescents experience body dissatisfaction (Dion et al. in Baker et al., 2019). Hence, based on this explanation and insight, the researcher chose female adolescents as the subjects in this study.

Previous studies have shown a correlation between obsession with beauty standards and body dissatisfaction. This study will complement the shortcomings of previous research. Referring to Frederick (2015), there is no one ideal beauty standard that applies in every culture. For these reasons, the researcher here specifically took the Korean beauty standard. Researchers also extended to how much it leads to excessive skincare buying, and what types of beauty products are their preferences. There is still little research on this topic in Indonesia. Especially those that focus on one standard of beauty. Though, BD is one of the huge body-related public health issues, and it is crucial to acknowledge it. Moreover, Korean culture has become more prevalent in Indonesia (Jeong et al., 2017). Hence, this research becomes urgent.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a quantitative approach, utilizing online questionnaires in the form of Google Forms, distributed across three distinct social media platforms: Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter/X. Additionally, researchers proactively sought participants through direct engagement at a Korean Pop-themed event. In the process, with the organizer's permission, researchers randomly approached event attendees, requesting their voluntary participation in filling out the questionnaire. Once consent was granted, the researcher presented a prepared barcode for scanning, leading participants to a linked Google Form questionnaire.

Based on the research topic, there are two variables measured, which are the "obsession with Korean beauty standards" and "body dissatisfaction". In addition to these two variables, the researcher also wants to know whether obsession with Korean beauty standards plays a role in shaping excessive skincare buying behavior, and what types of skincare products are their preferences. Participants were female late adolescents with an age range of 18-24 years, who had an interest in Korean culture and entertainment programs. The total number of participants who filled out the questionnaire was 205 late adolescent females, with 120 participants (58.5%) domiciled in JaBoDeTaBek (Jakarta - Bogor - Depok - Tangerang - Bekasi), 82 participants (40%) domiciled outside JaBoDeTaBek, and 3 participants (1.5%) domiciled outside Indonesia.

Measures

The measuring instrument used to measure obsession with Korean beauty standards is The Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Scale-3 (SATAQ-3), by Thompson et al. (2004). The instrument was translated into Bahasa Indonesia, and adapted according to the needs of the study. The SATAQ-3 has a total of 30 items. The items used in this study were 19 items.

The measuring instrument used to measure body dissatisfaction is a combination of two measuring instruments. The first instrument is The Objectified Body Consciousness Scale by

McKinley and Hyde (1996). The measuring instrument has a total of 24 questions. 10 items were used in this study. The second measuring instrument is the Body Dissatisfaction Scale by Maine and Kelly (2005), in the book *The Body Myth*. The original instrument has 26 items, 21 of which were used in this study. Both measuring instruments were translated into Bahasa Indonesia, and adapted according to the needs of the study. The total number of items used was 31.

The two questionnaires, after being adapted, translated, and combined, are now referred to as "Alat Ukur Obsesi Terhadap Korean Beauty Standard" and "Alat Ukur Body Dissatisfaction". The scale used as an answer choice is a 5 Likert scale (1 = "very unsuitable" to 5 = "very suitable"). Before being used, the two measuring instruments have gone through an expert judgment by three experts, to test the validity of each item in the measuring instrument.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to find out how much the percentage of obsession with Korean beauty standards plays a role in causing body dissatisfaction. In addition, researchers want to see whether obsession with Korean beauty standards plays a role in causing excessive skincare buying, and what types of skincare products are their preferences. Data processing was carried out using SPSS. Before that, the researchers first tested the validity and reliability of the questionnaire used. Then, after the test was done, the researcher conducted data processing to find out the percentage of roles by using linear regression. Finally, at last, a correlation test was conducted.

Based on the results of the Pearson Correlation validity test conducted using SPSS, all items in the "Alat Ukur Obsesi Terhadap Korean Beauty Standard" and "Alat Ukur Body Dissatisfaction", are declared valid with Sig. (2-tailed) <0.05. Based on the reliability test, the "Alat Ukur Obsesi Terhadap Korean Beauty Standard" has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.968, and the "Alat Ukur Body Dissatisfaction" has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.912.

Linear regression was conducted with the "Obsession with Korean Beauty Standard" as the independent variable, and "Body Dissatisfaction" as the dependent variable. The method used was the Enter method using SPSS. As it can be seen in table 1 below, the magnitude of the correlation or relationship value (R) is 0.759. The coefficient of determination (R Square) is 0.576, which means that the role of the independent variable (Obsession with Korean Beauty Standard) on the dependent variable (Body Dissatisfaction) is 57.6%.

Table 1

Model Summary OKBS and BD

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.759 ^a	.576	.573	15.17311

a. Predictors: (Constant), OKBS

Based on the output from Analysis of Variance (more can be seen in table 2), it is known that the value of $F = 275.235$, with a significance level of $0.000 < 0.5$, thus the regression model can be used to predict the Body Dissatisfaction variable, or simply put, there is a role of the variable "Obsession with Korean Beauty Standard" on the variable "Body Dissatisfaction".

Table 2
Analysis of Variance OKBS and BD

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	63365.506	1	63365.506	275.235	.000 ^b
	Residual	46735.304	203	230.223		
	Total	110100.810	204			

a. Dependent Variable: BD

b. Predictors: (Constant), OKBS

Based on the coefficient value (more can be seen in table 3), it is known that the regression coefficient value is 0.876. This states that with every 1% increase in the value of the Obsession with Korean Beauty Standard variable, the level of Body Dissatisfaction increases by 0.876. The regression coefficient has a positive value, which indicates that the direction in which the obsession with the Korean Beauty Standard variable affects Body Dissatisfaction is positive.

Table 3
Coefficients OKBS and BD

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	34.911	3.242		10.768	.000
	OKBS	.876	.053	.759	16.590	.000

a. Dependent Variable: BD

Linear regression was also conducted to analyze the extent to which the variable "Obsession with Korean Beauty Standard", as the independent variable, plays a role in causing excessive skincare buying (the dependent variable). Table 4 provides the test results. It can be seen that the correlation or relationship value (R) is 0.176. It can be seen that the correlation or relationship value (R) is 0.176. From this output, the coefficient of determination (R Square) is 0.031, which means that the role of the variable "Obsession with Korean Beauty Standard" in causing excessive skincare buying is 3.1%. Looking at this percentage figure, it can be stated that there are still many other factors that influence excessive skincare buying, not just the obsession with KBS.

Table 4
Model Summary OKBS and ESB

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.176 ^a	.031	.026	1.04943

a. Predictors: (Constant), OKBS

Based on the coefficient value (see table 5), it is known that the regression coefficient value is 0.009. This states that every 1% addition of the Obsession with Korean Beauty Standard variable, excessive skincare buying behavior increases by 0.009. The regression coefficient has a positive value, which indicates that the influence direction of the Obsession with Korean Beauty Standard variable on Excessive Skincare Buying is positive. As supplementary data, derived from the responses of 205 participants, we identified their strong inclination toward specific skincare products, which they both favor and purchase in significant quantities.

Table 5
Coefficients OKBS and EBS

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.537	.224		15.771	.000
	OKBS	.009	.004	.176	2.555	.011

a. Dependent Variable: Total ESB

In order: 87 participants (42.4%) have a preference for Korean skincare products, 64 participants (31.22%) have a preference for local (Indonesian) skincare products, 19 participants (9.3%) have a preference for Japanese skincare products, 13 participants (6.3%) have a preference for French skincare products, 13 participants (6.3%) are using products advised by doctors or beauty clinics, 7 participants (3.41%) have no particular preference, only purchase skincare that suits their skin, and the remaining participants are participants who simply do not use skincare.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study have shown that the Obsession with Korean Beauty Standard variable has a role of 57.6% in causing body dissatisfaction, and 3.1% in causing excessive skincare buying behavior. Hence, it can be concluded that this percentage means that the influence of other factors is also open to the emergence of body dissatisfaction and excessive skincare buying behavior. In addition, the results also show that every 1% increase in the value of the variable "obsession with the Korean Beauty Standard", the level of Body Dissatisfaction will increase by 0.876. Then, every 1% addition of the variable "Obsession with Korean Beauty Standard", the excessive skincare buying behavior increases by 0.009. Finally, the data on skincare preferences reveals a strong inclination towards Korean skincare, as indicated by 87 participants (42.4%).

Future research endeavors conducting similar studies are encouraged to expand their scope, considering diverse geographic locations and a more extensive participant pool. Furthermore, it is advisable for forthcoming studies to encompass a broader demographic, extending beyond solely female adolescents, as men may also contend with body dissatisfaction. Additionally, this study predominantly focuses on Korean beauty standards, and hence, it is suggested that future research explores a more comprehensive view, encompassing beauty standards from various cultural contexts, such as Western or Asian beauty standards in their entirety. The researcher earnestly hopes that the insights conveyed in this study will contribute to the advancement of knowledge and serve as a valuable reference for researchers in the future.

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