

## ADOLESCENT BOYS' SELF ESTEEM AND BODY SHAMING

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### ABSTRACT

*This research is qualitative research, using a descriptive method. The formulation of the problem studied is about the self-esteem of adolescents who experience body shaming in adolescent boys. The focus of this research is three young men aged 19-20 years who experience body shaming covering aspects of self-esteem, power, significance, wisdom, and competence. This study aims to describe self-esteem in adolescents who experience body shaming in male adolescents. Through this interview process we could see similarities between the three, namely that they had experienced low self-evaluation due to body shaming behavior. However, the three participants were supported by having quite high dimensions of power and competence in self-esteem. Based on the background of this research, in general female teenagers tend to experience decreased self-esteem more easily due to body shaming. The results of this study indicate that there is a change in the self-esteem of men who experience body shaming from low to high, where this can be seen from the aspect of strength in self-regulation and influencing others, the aspect of meaningfulness where adolescents feel physically not unique and the aspect of ability namely the inability of adolescents to show their potential in public, based on these three aspects, adolescent self-esteem is quite high.*

**Keywords:** Self Esteem, teenager, body shaming

### 1. PREFACE

Body shaming is an action or behavior that demeans, criticizes, or judges someone's physical appearance, including body shape, body size, weight, skin color, or other physical features (Rahayu, 2019). According to Wardhana, Kiranantia, Tantiani, & Puspitasari (2019), body shaming is the behavior of criticizing commenting on the physical body itself or others negatively. Gilbert (2007) explains body shaming as behavior that insults oneself or the weight, size and appearance of others. According to Vartanian et al. (2018), body shaming is judgment and discrimination against a person's physical appearance based on body size, body shape, or other physical appearance attributes, which can lower the self-esteem and psychological well-being of the individual who is the target of body shaming. The characteristics of body shaming behavior are criticism of someone's appearance by comparing it with other people, direct criticism of people in front of other people, and criticism of other people without their knowledge (Vargas, as cited in Chairani, 2018).

Adolescence is a transition period from child to adult starting from the age of 12 years to the early 20s (Papalia et al., 2007). Adolescence is not only characterized by a period of exploration and experimentation, but also by vulnerability to risky behavior (drug use, suicidal behavior, and sexual behavior) that can have many negative consequences (Banstola et al., 2020). During this period, teenagers will experience many physical changes that will make them start to pay attention to their physical appearance or that of the people around them.

Hurlock (2006) states that self-acceptance is the ability to accept everything that is in oneself, both the weaknesses and the strengths that one has. However, quite a few teenage girls are unable to accept their physical condition, so they sometimes compare their appearance and the appearance of other people. Based on the results of research conducted by Yahoo! Health in title Body Peace Resolution teenage girls experience more body shaming than teenage boys, because basically women tend to be less satisfied with their bodies and have a negative body image. Therefore, teenage girls tend to take a silent stance when exposed to body shaming behavior compared to teenage boys. However, it does not rule out the possibility that teenage boys can also receive body shaming because based on the results of the Body Peace Resolution survey conducted by Yahoo! Health in 2016, there were around 64% of teenage boys who received body shaming. Based on research analysis conducted by Alini and Meisyalla (2021), it was found that men experienced more body shaming than women, namely around 51 people (57.3%).

It is important to remember that body shaming can have a negative impact on the psychological well-being of individuals who experience it, including on self-esteem, self-worth, and overall quality of life.

According to Coopersmith (2003), a person can have high self-esteem if their expected self-concept (ideal self) matches the conditions they are currently experiencing (real self) and vice versa. Apart from that, according to Santrock, self-esteem is a person's way of evaluating themselves and comparing the ideal self-concept where a person wants himself to be in an expected condition (ideal self) with the actual self-concept, namely the individual's current condition (real self).

As for another opinion, according to Branscome and Baron (2003), self-esteem is an evaluation of oneself, whether in the form of high or low things that originate from oneself or other people's opinions. It is important for individuals to have self-esteem because this can make individuals appreciate more what they have. This is different from individuals' low self-esteem because they will focus on their weaknesses so that sometimes they forget about their strengths.

Teenagers with low self-esteem are not entirely caused by the behavior of comparing the teenager's physical appearance with other people, but the surrounding environment can also influence it. Therefore, it is important to respect diversity in physical appearance and avoid engaging in or supporting body shaming in our social interactions.

Based on the background of the problem above, the author feels interested in conducting research with the aim of finding out what the self-esteem of teenage boys who experience body shaming is like because not many teenage boys experience a decrease in self-esteem due to body shaming.

### **1.1 Current Research**

Based on a research study entitled "Description of the Self-Esteem of Adolescent Boys Who Feel Imperfect Due to Body Shaming", a problem formulation was obtained as follows: How is the description of the self-esteem of teenage boys who feel imperfect due to body shaming?

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research design**

The data collection method in this research uses in-depth interview techniques. Banister et al. (as cited in Poerwandari, 2007) say that interviews are discussions and questions and answers directed at achieving certain goals. In-depth interviews are a face-to-face process carried out directly between the interviewer and the respondent to be able to explore or reveal deeper and more personal data (Patton in Poerwandari, 2007). This interview can go as expected, it will use instructions or guidelines. These instructions are used so that the aspects discussed in the research are always kept in mind during the interview process. (Patton in Poerwandari, 2007).

The data analysis technique used by researchers in conducting this research is inductive thematic analysis because researchers conduct research based on general events that are currently occurring. According to Poerwandari (2007), inductive analysis is when a researcher tries to understand an existing situation without making it fictitious so that it can match the actual situation.

### **Ethics and participants**

The characteristics of the informants involved in this research have been determined by criteria that have been adapted to the research objectives. The informants needed in this research were 3 people who met the informant criteria, namely a man who experienced body shaming, this man considered himself imperfect or imperfect due to body shaming. This research looked for male informants because men are considered more indifferent to their appearance. Adolescence is considered a period that makes individuals experience many changes both physically and psychologically.

### **Procedure**

This research was conducted for 6 months from May to October 2023. We obtained information about the three participants from two members of our group. Our group members asked the participants' willingness to become research subjects and were willing to be interviewed via Zoom Meeting via the Line platform and also explained that the interviews were being conducted. is about the self-esteem of teenage boys due to body shaming in the past and present. After the participants answered that they were willing, the researcher asked the three participants' schedule and willingness to be interviewed and provided informed consent so that it could be signed and read. After the informed consent has been signed, the interview process is carried out via Zoom Meeting which lasts around 20-35 minutes. During the course of the interview, we recorded the interview with the prior consent of the participant.

### **Data collection**

Data was obtained through in-depth interviews with 3 participants at different times. The researcher used an interview guide prepared by the researcher according to the topic of discussion in learning and based on theory.

### **Processing and data analysis**

After collecting all the necessary data, the researcher processes and analyzes the results of the research subject interviews. First, the researcher created verbatim and coded a complete interview transcript from the recorded sound into a collection of sentences and original audio from the interview. Second, the researcher makes initial notes to select the required data. Third, the researcher condenses the facts by reconstructing the participant's sentences into sentences that are well structured and can make it easier for the researcher to understand the meaning of the

subject's narrative. Fourth, the researcher draws and finds out the themes that emerge from the answers of each source or the researcher gives a code. Fifth, the researcher draws the superordinate through the themes that the researcher has found across all participants or the researcher creates categories from the themes that have been found. Sixth, the researcher draws and looks for higher themes from all participants or collects the same themes through categories from each participant. Seventh, the researcher analyzed the data by matching patterns from the coding that the researcher had made for each participant, data that had been categorized as linked based on the theory in chapter II. In the eighth stage, the researcher begins to identify whether there is a particular theme that stands out to one of the participants, or whether this theme has psychological value that the researcher must convey.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Body shaming

Body shaming is an attitude or behavior towards weight, body size and appearance of oneself or others (Gilbert, 2007). Some people are familiar with the term Body Shaming. Body shaming is often carried out in the surrounding environment, both to ourselves and to other people. Body Shaming is an act of bullying carried out through negative comments.

Based on the results of the interviews we conducted, both participants experienced body shaming at the same time, namely when they were still in elementary school, while the next participant experienced body shaming when they were in junior high school. Participant RA said, "So it happened when I was in elementary school, there I was in a group of 5 friends, and at that time I didn't know if it was body shaming and yes, that's normal, I'm still in elementary school, I don't know what body shaming means, and then we used to have nicknames. So my friends kept getting good names while my nickname was rice sack, ..." (RA, W - 1, 25/5/2023, 3 - 12).

Different from DO participants. He said, "The first time I experienced body shaming was when I was in elementary school, because my neck was a bit slanted." (DO, W -2, 5/29/2023, 3 - 5). "Only at that time, a friend of mine called me while shouting, calling me a derogatory name like that, that's all." (MM, W-3, 8/15/2023, 205-220)

The three participants also received body shaming from their closest friends as material for joking and making other people entertained. Participant RA said, "... and at that time I thought that was one way for me to fit in with them, and until now I've just gotten used to it because now the five of us are still friends and forget about that." (RA, W - 1, 5/25/2023, 12 - 18). The same is true for DO participants. He said, "... So, sometimes my friends just joke around, maybe. But maybe I'm someone who also likes to carry feelings, so I feel like I'm just body shaming." (DO, W -2, 5/29/2023, 5 - 10), "Well, at that time it turned out that my teacher was listening and then My friend called me directly, "Hey, you, come here. It's nice for you to say that to your friends." Then, when I finally realized it, I was like, oh, it turns out it's really bad." (MM, W-3, 8/15/2023, 205-220).

Thus, the three participants are of course included in the group of people affected by body shaming. Participants RA, DO, and MM have something in common in that all three participants were treated with body shaming when they were relatively young, which made a clear impression in the minds of the three participants. The three participants also have something in common, namely receiving body shaming from their closest friends.

Apart from similarities, of course there are differences between the three participants, namely that the explanations given by RA and MM participants are clearer than those given by DO participants. The description of the body shaming experiences experienced by RA and MM participants was more detailed than that of DO participants.

### **Self esteem of teenage boys**

According to Branscome and Byrne (2023), self-esteem is an evaluation of oneself whether in the form of high or low things that originate from oneself or other people's opinions. It is important for individuals to have self-esteem because this can make individuals appreciate more what they have.

Based on the interviews we conducted, initially both participants had poor self-esteem. Participant RA said, "So first, when I was called a sack of rice, I was still in elementary school so I didn't really feel the effects of body shaming, right." (RA, W - 1, 5/25/2023, 65 - 70). Based on what participant RA said, at first he didn't think too much about it. Likewise, MM participants felt that this matter should be taken lightly without realizing that their mental health would certainly be affected by body shaming. "But at that time I was still like, never mind, I'm so stupid. It's like that at least." (MM, W-3, 8/15/2023, 205-220)

However, then participant RA said, "When my body used to be like that, people thought my opinion was just an ordinary person's opinion. To be honest, I didn't know before, so now I'm quite thin and as my body size increases (muscle increases) I don't know if that will increase people's respect for me. This is the biggest thing I felt when I was oversized before and now. So now I feel like every opinion or word that I put out of my mouth they all listen to. They have higher respect for me, even just from my body shape (which has now changed)." (RA, W - 1, 5/25/2023, 77 - 97).

Participant MM also explained almost the same thing where he tried to improve his condition which in turn led to an increase in self-esteem. "Well, then after starting with myself, I started trying to change it myself without talking to my parents or other people. Starting from skincare and others. There I finally felt fresher, even though I don't know if there was a change or not. Then after a while, for some reason, my parents said, "Hey, you're fat now, aren't you?" Well, because of the encouragement from those words, I became even more enthusiastic. Then my friends also gradually realized that I was different from before. So yes, I'm even more encouraged because of that." (MM, W-3, 8/15/2023, 235-250)

So, from the explanations of participants RA and MM it can be said that their self-esteem increased after they received the body shaming speech which made them motivated to change their body shape.

Meanwhile, participant DO said, "Maybe in the beginning I was like that because I felt different, like "oh, never mind, I'm different" like that, but over time, because I was also motivated by my parents or something, I became enthusiastic again like that." (DO , W -2, 5/29/2023, 74 - 80). More or less the same as RA participants, DO participants initially felt a lack of self-confidence. However, then DO participants used it as motivation to become more confident even though they didn't change anything about their bodies.

Thus, the three participants can be said to have good self-esteem at this time. Participants RA, DO, and MM have similarities in positive terms where all three participants use the body

shaming incident they experienced as motivation to become a better person in the future. There are also differences, namely the differences between the three participants in responding to the motivation obtained from the body shaming incident which the two participants received, namely participants RA and MM who made changes to their bodies by exercising to shape their bodies, while participants DO only changed their mindset by being more willing and not making it happen. excessive thinking.

### **The impact of body shaming behavior**

The process of body shaming can be formed due to interactions and influences from the environment and then these influences have an impact on the individual. Each individual has a different reaction when facing body shaming treatment, as well as the impacts that arise are different, according to Cahyani & Nuqul (2019). Supported by the results of interviews from the three participants, there were differences in their reactions to the body shaming behavior they received.

"Well, when I was oversized I felt like everyone didn't take me seriously. That's the difference between then and now. When my body used to be like that, people thought my opinion was just an ordinary person's opinion. To be honest, I didn't know before, so now I'm quite thin and as my body size increases (muscle increases) I don't know if that will increase people's respect for me. This is the biggest thing I felt when I was oversized before and now." (RA, W-1, 5/23/2023, 73-89).

Participant RA felt that when he experienced this behavior he felt that everyone did not take him seriously or it could be said that other people did not respect him. It's different when RA has made changes to himself, he feels that other people give him high respect.

Meanwhile, for DO participants, at the beginning of the body shaming, DO participants were not yet able to accept the words given by their friends around them, so they felt hurt. "Maybe in the beginning I was like that because I felt different, like "oh, that's enough, I'm different" like that, but over time because I was motivated by my parents or something, I became enthusiastic again like that." (DO, W-2, 5/29/2023, 40-50). Through the sentences given by their friends, DO participants experienced quite a decrease in self-esteem which made them different from other people to the point where they felt insecure.

Meanwhile, MM participants initially thought it was a joke from their peers, but as time went by, MM participants realized that it was an insult and tried to improve themselves. "Yeah, it's not like I'm sad or crying. I'm just normal and because I'm also there, I don't think it's an insult, right? I just thought it was a joke." (MM, W-3, 8/15/2023, 160).

Through these interviews, the results showed that the three participants experienced quite a big impact on body shaming behavior. Participants RA and MM felt that their self-esteem was low due to the words their friends said. However, RA and MM participants used this as motivation for themselves to change into better individuals. Meanwhile, DO participants experienced a decrease in self-esteem which made them less confident due to their body shape being different from other people's. Through this body shaming behavior, the DO participant becomes a stronger individual, so that when he receives the body shaming behavior again, he can accept it.

### **Discussion**

This qualitative research report aims to determine the self-esteem of adolescent boys as a result of body shaming. As is known in today's social life, due to the values constructed and socialized by society, individuals always receive views and assessments on everything, both in appearance and behavior in the community environment. This makes individuals, especially women, try to appear attractive in public or in society, regarding matters of the body, lifestyle becomes a commodity and is consumed by those who consider the concept of body care as an awareness (Ibrahim & Suranto, 1998).

Based on the background of this research, in general female teenagers tend to experience decreased self-esteem more easily due to body shaming. Adolescents with low self-esteem due to body shaming will withdraw from their surrounding environment 26.7% of the time (). Data quoted by the UNESCO website based on the October 2018 Global School Student Health Survey (GSHS) shows that 144 countries reported that 16.1% of children were physically abused. Cases in Indonesia are ranked highest compared to Vietnam and Nepal with the same number, around 79 and next in line are Cambodia 73, Pakistan 43% (Sindo, 2017).

However, after conducting interviews with two participants who had experienced body shaming as teenagers, they were able to experience a decrease in self-esteem, and proved that body shaming does not recognize gender. As stated, according to Branscome & Byrne (2023), self-esteem is an evaluation of oneself, whether in the form of high or low things that originate from oneself or other people's opinions. In this research we tried to find a picture of self-esteem in the three participants, namely RA, MM and DO. Through this interview process we could see similarities between the three, namely that they had experienced low self-evaluation due to body shaming behavior.

However, the three participants were supported by having quite high dimensions of power and competence in self-esteem. "Now that I'm the Head of Division, when interviewing, appearance is the first thing that the Head of Division looks for. So a little story, in my public relations it is divided into 2 divisions, the networking division and education public affair specialist division. Well, my job in the networking division is to meet people, build relationships, make deals. And that's really true." (RA, W-1, 5/25/2023, 150-159).

This can be proven by RA being active in organizations and even serving as chairman of organizations on his campus. Likewise with DO participants who have the dimensions of power and competence, in a previous interview he said, "Maybe at first I was like that because I felt different, like "oh, that's enough, I'm different myself" like that, but over time because I was motivated, it was the same. parents or whatever, I'm so enthusiastic again." (DO, W-2, 5/29/2023, 40-50), so that now participant DO is more able to accept the differences in physical form that he has, as well as participant MM "Hmm. There is. Because I see myself that way too. So it's like okay, that's why I said earlier, I'm just trying to love myself like that." (MM, W-3, 8/15/2023, 150).

RA, MM and DO were initially hurt by body shaming, but after this happened they were not discouraged and even proved this untruth by changing themselves in a positive and better direction. Based on information from RA participants, he felt hurt because he was not appreciated by his friends because of his physical condition. RA participant felt that the words or opinions he expressed were often considered nonsense, so he did not get respect from the people around him. "When my body used to be like that, people thought my opinion was just an ordinary person's opinion." (RA, W-1, 5/25/2023, 150-159).

Then, the interview results obtained from DO participants felt that they were different from their friends, so they experienced a decrease in self-esteem in the form of feeling no self-confidence and experienced a decrease in motivation to come to school. "Maybe in the beginning you were like that because you felt different, like "oh, never mind, how come I'm different to myself" like that." (DO, W-2, 5/29/2023, 75-80). Meanwhile, participant MM initially thought it was just a joke, but as time went on it made participant MM more and more uncomfortable, but participant MM didn't really care about this, instead he tried to improve himself. "I still do everything as usual. I don't think my shortcomings limit me. So yes, I'm still going to school as usual, I'm still taking part in extracurricular activities and so on." (MM, W-3, 8/15/2023, 280-300)

When parents, caregivers, friends or the surrounding environment often say words that demean, corner, belittle, or label them with negative labels, it makes all these insults crystallize within that person. Once this impact crystallizes within a person, their self-confidence will be relatively low and will also affect aspects of their life, both personal and social life. However, our research proves that not all incidents of body shaming reduce the victim's self-confidence, such as RA participants who said that these sentences did not make them feel insecure, but instead RA used these words as motivational words that build themselves up. become a better person.

Then for the DO participant, the body shaming behavior that he received indeed caused him to experience a decrease in self-esteem in the form of lack of self-confidence, but with the help of people around him in the form of the motivation he received, the DO participant was able to get through and accept it all. The same thing happened with MM participants who were actually motivated by the insult which made them have the will to improve themselves.

**Table 1**

*Participant's Background*

	<b>Participant 1 (RA)</b>	<b>Participant 2 (DO)</b>	<b>Participant 3 (MM)</b>
<b>Age (year)</b>	20	18	20
<b>Activity</b>	Studying and active in organizations	Studying	Studying and active in organizations
<b>Education</b>	Bachelor level education Bachelor degree majoring in mechanical engineering, 4th semester.	Undergraduate level education Bachelor degree majoring in communication science, 2nd semester.	Undergraduate education Bachelor degree majoring in electrical engineering, 5th semester
<b>Relationships with current friends</b>	But yeah, like I said earlier, that's fine with me now. Relations with friends are currently quite good.	In the beginning, when I received those words, my heart might have hurt, but over time I just relaxed.	Treat body shaming as just a joke.
<b>First time being exposed to body shaming</b>	We used to have nicknames like that, then my friends got good names while	The first time I experienced body shaming was when I was in elementary school, because	When I entered junior high school I met a new circle of people and new friends, I thought I would adapt,



	my nickname was rice sack, and well, at that time I thought that was one way for me to fit in with them.	my neck was a bit slanted. So, sometimes my friends just joke around, maybe. But maybe I'm someone who likes to carry my feelings, so I feel like I'm just body shaming.	like my friends." I adapted to the way I met them, I entered junior high school one by one, then for a month in grade 7, I was called skinny, whatever, but I thought oh, that's their way. I got friends and I just think of it as entertainment and I'm also a person who doesn't talk and I'm also a person who doesn't reply, so it's just entertainment.
<b>The intensity of body shaming</b>	As for intensity, I can say that 50.50 is neither too rare nor too often.	50% is 50%, but not every time. Like, for example, when we're joking with each other, sometimes someone goes too far and gets physical or whatever they say.	If the frequency is every day.
<b>The impact of body shaming</b>	So that's the biggest impact that I felt. I feel like everyone sees me more as "someone". They recognize my existence more now, when my physical body has changed.	Wow, that's for sure, that's definitely it, I can't believe it..	Yes, it doesn't make me sad or cry. I'm just normal and because I'm also there, I don't think it's an insult, right? I just thought it was a joke. Because I also told them to come back like that. So it's like never mind.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research aims to explain that the experience of body shaming can affect the self-esteem of adolescent boys, although it is generally thought that body shaming is more commonly experienced by adolescent girls. This research also wants to look at the experiences of two participants, namely RA, MM and DO, to see the similarities and differences in the dimensions of their self-esteem, especially in terms of power and competence. In addition, this research aims to show that not all victims of body shaming experience a decrease in self-confidence, but some individuals, such as RA, can use negative words as motivation to build themselves into a better person.

Thus, the aim of this study was to provide a better understanding of the influence of body shaming on adolescent boys' self-esteem and to highlight strategies that individuals may use to deal with experiences of body shaming and maintain positive self-esteem.

The limitation of this research is the small sample size. This discussion only included three participants, namely RA, MM and DO. With a limited number of participants, generalization of findings is difficult. The results of a broader and more inclusive study could provide a more representative picture of the influence of body shaming on the self-esteem of adolescent boys. Therefore, it is recommended to involve more male adolescents as participants in research to provide better representation and broaden the generalizability of the findings. Efforts could be made to obtain a more demographically and socially diverse sample This study provides insight into the experiences of adolescent boys who have experienced body shaming. This research recommends that people become more aware of the negative effects of body shaming and

promote body positivity. In summary, the research highlights the importance of respecting physical diversity and avoiding body shaming in social interactions to prevent negative impacts on one's self-esteem. Based on the research results, suggestions can also be given to readers to emphasize awareness and education about body positivity.

Findings from this study can be used to inform interventions and policies aimed at promoting positive body image and self-esteem among adolescents. The research findings will be discussed with reference to the experiences of both participants. These findings will be evaluated to what extent they are in accordance with the theory previously put forward. In addition, other patterns or findings of interest will also be discussed. The implications of these findings will be explained in the context of adolescent boys' self-esteem and body shaming.

The social environment, such as parents, friends, or society, has an influence on the formation of adolescent boys' self-esteem. Certain factors in the environment will be discussed regarding how they can increase or decrease self-esteem. The role of parents and the surrounding environment in helping overcome body shaming and strengthening adolescent boys' self-esteem will also be discussed. The implications of the findings of this research in real life will be asked the question "How can these findings be used to increase awareness about body shaming and strengthen the self-esteem of adolescent boys?".

The discussion will include suggestions or actions that can be taken by individuals, families, schools, or communities to reduce body shaming and support the development of self-esteem in adolescent boys. Parents can be positive role models for teenage boys in terms of body image and self-esteem. They should avoid making negative comments about their child's physical appearance and appreciate the uniqueness and diversity of bodies. It is important to create a safe and supportive environment at home, school, and in the community, where young men feel comfortable sharing their experiences without fear of ridicule or judgment.

It is important to remember that the findings from these two participants do not represent the entire population of male adolescents. Be sure not to overgeneralize based on these findings, but rather use them as a starting point for further discussion and research to enrich this research. Each paper ends with a conclusion, which summarizes the results of the paper written, as well as suggestions as recommendations resulting from the research.

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