

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BODY IMAGE AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE IN UNMARRIED EARLY ADULTHOOD WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Early adulthood is a critical period in individual development, where women often face social pressure related to beauty standards. Idealized beauty standards, such as a slim body and youthful appearance, can influence women's body image, which in turn affects self-acceptance. Anxiety about appearance, or "beauty anxiety," often leads to low self-esteem and the inability to fully accept oneself. This study used a non-experimental quantitative method with a correlation test to measure the relationship between body image and self-acceptance. Participants in this study were unmarried early adult women, selected using a purposive sampling technique, with a total of 205 participants. The instruments used were the MBSRQ-AS scale to measure body image and the USAQ to measure self-acceptance. Data analysis using Pearson correlation test showed a correlation coefficient of 0.162 with a significance value of $p = 0.000$, indicating a significant positive relationship between body image and self-acceptance. Additional results showed significant differences in body image based on relationship status and employment status, while self-acceptance showed significant differences based on with whom the individual lives. However, reasons for not being married did not show significant differences on either variable. These findings indicate that a positive body image can help increase self-acceptance, although self-acceptance is also influenced by supporting social and environmental factors.

Keywords: body image, self-acceptance, unmarried early adulthood, women

1. PREFACE

Most early adult women view appearance as important and often compare their bodies to ideal beauty standards developed in society (Tiara & Durahman, 2013). Women who do not conform to these standards often receive criticism from the environment, which results in a decrease in self-esteem and can lead them to delay marriage due to fear of rejection based on physical appearance (Sunesti & Sari, 2021). Early adulthood, which occurs between the ages of 20 and 40, is an important phase in which women experience physical, emotional, and social changes (Arnett et al., 2014). Erik Erikson (1959) stated that this period involves a developmental crisis of "intimacy vs. isolation," where success in forming close, committed relationships helps avoid a sense of social isolation. Negative social labels for unmarried women aged 26-30 further emphasize this challenge (Adetya & Manurung, 2022). At this age, physical appearance becomes one of the main concerns to attract the attention of the opposite sex, which causes many women to undergo treatments, both traditional and modern, to look more attractive Maulani (2019). However, challenges related to ideal beauty standards, such as a slim body, flawless skin, and youthful appearance, can reduce women's confidence in their own bodies. This condition encourages women to compare themselves with other women who are considered more attractive, and leads to feelings of insecurity Grogan (2017). The phenomenon of "beauty anxiety," or appearance anxiety, arises as a form of fear of rejection due to non-standard appearance, and this has an impact on low self-esteem and self-acceptance (Frederick et al., 2016). Body image, which includes an individual's perception and attitude towards their body, has five main aspects: appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, satisfaction with specific areas, anxiety about fatness, and body categorization (Cash et al., 2002). Individuals with a positive body image are generally more satisfied and confident with their bodies, while a negative body image often leads to difficulties in self-acceptance, which can hinder social skills

and the quality of interpersonal relationships (Ramanda et al., 2019). Negative body image, especially in the context of beauty standards, greatly affects one's self-acceptance (Syfa et al., 2024). According to research by Frederick et al. (2016) body image anxiety can reduce self-acceptance. Good self-acceptance allows a person to deal with social pressure related to beauty standards, increase self-confidence in social interactions, and protect against psychological disorders that may arise (Bernard, 2014; Hutabarat & Agustina, 2024; Syfa et al., 2024). Maulani (2019) research shows that women with good self-acceptance are better protected from the negative impact of social pressure related to beauty. This self-acceptance also helps unmarried early adult women to have firmness and confidence without having to follow environmental standards (Budiyantri, 2022).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Samples

The sample criteria in this study were (a) Young adult women aged between 20-40 years; (b) Not married; and (c) Single or partnered. A total of 204 samples were collected in this study. The sample in this study was dominated by those who did not have a partner ($n = 145$, 71.4%), aged 21 years ($n = 46$, 22.7%), worked ($n = 131$, 64.5%), lived with their family ($n = 174$, 85.7%), and chose the reason for not being married because they still wanted to have a career ($n = 138$, 68%).

Measurement

The Multidimensional Body Self-Relation Questionnaire Appearance Scale (MBSRQ-AS), developed by Cash et al. (2011), consists of 34 items designed to assess individuals' perceptions of their body appearance across five dimensions. Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale. This measurement tool was initially developed by Cash and Pruzinsky (2002).

The Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire (USAQ) measures self-acceptance and was created by Chamberlain and Haaga (2001). The USAQ contains 20 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating a positive attitude toward oneself. This reflects an individual's ability to acknowledge and accept all aspects of themselves, including both positive and negative qualities, along with an optimistic view of past experiences.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection in this study will be conducted through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Line, and Twitter. The research instrument used in this study is a Google Form questionnaire. The sampling method applied is purposive sampling, a technique based on predetermined criteria that align with the research objectives. This study uses the nonparametric Pearson Correlation test to determine the correlation between body image and self-acceptance, because the data was distributed normal and t-tests to examine differences based on participant demographics.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study conducted a normality test on the variables of body image and self-acceptance. The normality test was performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test to determine if the data was normally distributed. Based on the normality test results for both variables in Table 1, the data was found to be normally distributed with a Sig. value of $0.084 > 0.05$.

Table 1

Normality Test Results between Body Image and Self-Acceptance

Variable	Assymp. Sig (2-tailed)	Description
Body Image and Self-Acceptance	0.084	Normal

This study conducted a correlation test between body image and self-acceptance. The correlation test was performed to determine the relationship between these two variables. The results of the correlation test for both variables in Table 2 were conducted using Pearson correlation because the data were normally distributed. A p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ was obtained with a correlation coefficient of 0.162, indicating a significant positive correlation. From these results, it can be concluded that the higher an individual's body image, the higher their self-acceptance.

Table 2

Correlation Test Results between Body Image and Self-Acceptance

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.
Body Image and Self-Acceptance	1 0.162*	0.000

Based on Table 3 and 4, the results indicate a significant difference in body image (MBSRQ-AS) between those with a partner and those without ($p = 0.012$), while the difference in self-acceptance (USAQ) is not significant ($p = 0.091$). According to the literature, women with a partner may receive positive validation regarding their appearance, which supports a more positive body image (Grogan, 2017). In contrast, women without a partner may experience greater social pressure to meet ideal beauty standards, which negatively impacts their body image but does not directly affect self-acceptance (Frederick et al., 2016).

Table 3

Coefficient of Determination Test Results between Relationship Status and Body Image

Relationship Status	N	Mean Rank	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
Having a Partner	58	96.52	0.012	There is no difference
Don't Have a Partner	145	93.90		

Table 4

Coefficient of Determination Test Results between Relationship Status and Self-Acceptance

Relationship Status	N	Mean Rank	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
Having a Partner	58	57.14	0.091	There is no difference
Don't Have a Partner	145	58.67		

Based on Table 5 and 6, there is a significant difference in body image between the working and non-working groups ($p=0.033$), but not on self-acceptance ($p=0.187$), indicating that work can strengthen body image, perhaps because the work environment requires a certain appearance or provides opportunities for supportive social interactions (Sunesti & Sari, 2021). On the other hand, self-acceptance appears to be more stable and is not directly influenced by employment status, as explained in the theory of self-acceptance which is intrinsic and does not depend on the external environment (Bernard, 2014).

Table 5

Coefficient of Determination Test Results between Employment Status and Body Image

Employment Status	N	Mean Rank	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
Working	131	93.90	0.033	There is a difference
Not Working	72	96.00		

Table 6

Coefficient of Determination Test Results between Employment Status and Self-Acceptance

Employment Status	N	Mean Rank	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
Working	131	58.63	0.187	There is a difference
Not Working	72	57.50		

Based on Table 7 and 8, the results show a significant difference in self-acceptance based on living together (with family, friends, or alone) with ($p=0.008$), but no significant difference in body image ($p=0.184$). Living with family or friends may provide emotional support that strengthens an individual's self-acceptance, while living alone may make individuals feel more vulnerable to negative perceptions (Syfa et al., 2024). This supports the concept that social support positively influences women's self-acceptance.

Table 7

Coefficient of Determination Test Results between Living Together With and Self-Acceptance

Live Together With	N	Mean Rank	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
Family	174	58.55	0.008	There is no difference
Alone	5	50.60		
Friend	24	57.46		

Table 8

Coefficient of Determination Test Results between Living Together With and Body Image

Live Together With	N	Mean Rank	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
Family	174	94.30	0.184	There is no difference
Alone	5	95.60		
Friend	24	94.96		

Based on Table 9 and 10, the results show that reasons for not being married, such as wanting a career or not having found a suitable partner, do not have a significant influence on self-acceptance ($p=0.148$) and body image ($p=0.935$). This is in line with the findings of Grogan (2017), who stated that internal or personal reasons, such as a focus on career or personal choices, were less influenced by external pressures on body image or self-acceptance.

Table 9

Coefficient of Determination Test Results between Living Together With and Body Image

The Reason Not Married	N	Mean Rank	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
Still Want to Have a Career	138	58.57	0.148	There is no difference
Haven't Found a Partner	44	58.45		
Choose Not to Marry	2	54.50		
Other	19	55.57		

Table 10

Coefficient of Determination Test Results between Living Together With and Body Image

The Reason Not Married	N	Mean Rank	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
Still Want to Have a Career	138	94.70	0.935	There is no difference
Haven't Found a Partner	44	94.16		
Choose Not to Marry	2	95.50		
Other	19	95.26		

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The conclusions from this study indicate that women's body image is influenced by external factors such as relationship status and employment. Employment itself also plays a role in strengthening body image, possibly due to appearance demands in the work environment and supportive social interactions. However, employment status does not significantly impact self-acceptance, which is more stable and intrinsic. Living arrangements also affect self-acceptance, with those living with family or friends tending to experience stronger self-acceptance due to emotional support. Lastly, personal or internal reasons for not marrying, such as focusing on a career, do not significantly affect body image or self-acceptance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researcher extends sincere thanks to all participants and to the Faculty of Psychology at Tarumanagara University for their support in conducting this research.

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