

The Effect of Upward Comparison on Body Dissatisfaction Among Female Patients in Aesthetic Clinics

Muh. Nur Hidayat Nurdin*, Kurniati Zainuddin, Yusfitri Nursyahwalni Mangarengi, & Zahir Alfattah Darussalam

Fakultas Psikologi, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia

Abstract

This study aims to examine the effect of upward comparison on body dissatisfaction among female patients at aesthetic clinics. The research employed a quantitative correlational method with a population consisting of female aesthetic clinic patients. The sample included 150 women aged 18–25 years, selected using an incidental sampling technique. Data were collected through the adapted versions of The Upward and Downward Appearance Comparison Scale (UDACS) and the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire–Appearance Scale (MBSRQ-AS). The collected data were analyzed using a simple linear regression test. The results revealed a significant effect of upward comparison on body dissatisfaction among female aesthetic clinic patients. Furthermore, the findings showed a positive direction of influence, with an effective contribution of 19.6%. This indicates that the higher the level of upward comparison, the higher the level of body dissatisfaction.

Keywords: Upward Comparison, Body Dissatisfaction, Female Patients, Aesthetic Clinics, Physical Appearance.

1. Introduction

Physical changes are one of the fundamental aspects of individual development. Santrock (2012) explains that the age range of 18 to 25 years falls under early adulthood, a phase in which individuals reach optimal physical maturity. Jannah, Kamsani, and Ariffin (2021) state that during this period, physical changes reach their peak as a result of biological development that began during adolescence. Along with physical maturity, individuals begin to demonstrate greater stability in adapting to their environment and making decisions.

According to Papalia and Feldman (2015), early adulthood is also characterized by the development of more logical and realistic thinking abilities. This development enables individuals to assess situations rationally and consider the consequences of their actions. Best and Ban (2021) add that increased cognitive ability makes individuals more aware of social perceptions and judgments toward themselves. In a social context, women tend to be more attentive to environmental perceptions of physical appearance.

Physical appearance plays a vital role in social interaction. Sari, Karsadi, and Pambudhi (2023) suggest that physical appearance influences social life, particularly in forming friendships. Santrock (2012) also states that individuals with attractive appearances tend to receive positive evaluations and are more easily accepted in social environments. One aspect that often becomes the center of attention is body shape, which is considered a reflection of an individual's physical attractiveness.

Zahid, Ayu, and Ikayanti (2023) explain that women often strive to achieve an ideal body shape according to beauty standards, although not all succeed in reaching their desired appearance. However, research by Malau and Rosito (2023) indicates that most women still perceive their bodies as less than ideal and tend to compare themselves with others. This condition is closely related to the emergence of dissatisfaction with one's body, known as *body dissatisfaction* (Lestari, Matulesi, & Pratiti, 2022).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: dayat20858@gmail.com

Stice and Shaw (2002) define *body dissatisfaction* as the feeling of discontent with one's body shape due to a mismatch between the actual body condition and the expected ideal standard. This condition can affect both mental health and individual behavior. Candra and Novianty (2022) add that dissatisfaction with one's body often arises from discrepancies between physical attributes and social beauty standards. Najla and Zulfiana (2022) state that such feelings encourage individuals to improve physical aspects they consider imperfect. One way individuals attempt to do this is by utilizing services from aesthetic clinics (Royani & Berampu, 2022).

Technological advancements also contribute to shaping society's beauty standards. Utami (2019) notes that perceptions of body shape and appearance are heavily influenced by technological progress and digital media. According to the ZAP Beauty Index Survey (2023), 76.4% of Indonesian women routinely visit aesthetic clinics for treatments. These clinics not only provide physical care services but also help motivate clients to achieve their desired appearance.

A preliminary survey showed that 50% of female aesthetic clinic patients perceived their body shape as less than ideal. Such dissatisfaction often leads individuals to compare themselves with others. As many as 66.7% of respondents reported frequently comparing their facial features and upper body parts. This phenomenon reflects a tendency toward *social comparison* (Dewi, 2020), which is a self-evaluation process through comparison with others (Guyer & Johnston, 2018). Festinger (as cited in Arshuha & Amalia, 2019) identified two forms of social comparison: *upward comparison* and *downward comparison*.

Upward comparison refers to comparisons made with individuals perceived to have certain superior qualities (Megawati & Nurhayati, 2022). Coelho (2023) notes that women tend to compare themselves more frequently with those considered more attractive. Although such comparisons can foster positive motivation (Swari & Tobing, 2024), excessive comparison can also lead to negative outcomes (Dinata & Pratama, 2022).

A study conducted by Semeer (2022) found a significant relationship between social comparison and body dissatisfaction among female psychology students at UIN Malang. Similarly, research by Najla and Zulfiana (2022) revealed that the lower an individual's tendency to compare themselves with others, the lower their level of body dissatisfaction. Humaira and Aviani (2023) further stated that women who compare themselves with those perceived as having better body shapes and sizes tend to experience discomfort with their own bodies.

Based on previous research, most studies have focused on women who use social media. However, studies examining *upward comparison* and *body dissatisfaction* among women who are aesthetic clinic patients remain limited. This gap serves as the basis for the present study, which aims to examine *The Effect of Upward Comparison on Body Dissatisfaction Among Female Patients in Aesthetics Clinics*.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Body Dissatisfaction

Cooper, Taylor, Cooper and Fairburn (Hati & Soetjningsih, 2022) suggest that body dissatisfaction refers to the evaluation of one's body through comparison with the body image of others, extreme views about the body, one's understanding of their own body size and shape, and drastic changes in body perception. Stice and Shaw (2002) define body dissatisfaction as discomfort related to body appearance that can affect an individual's mental health and behavior. Similarly, Candra and Novianty (2022) describe body dissatisfaction as a negative self-evaluation of one's body due to discrepancies between one's physical attributes and those considered ideal.

According to Cooper et al. (as cited in Maulida, 2023), body dissatisfaction consists of four key aspects 1) Self perception of body shape is the individual's mindset formed by their own evaluation of their body shape; 2) Comparative perception of body image the tendency to compare one's body parts with those of others in order to identify perceived differences; 3) Attitude concerning body image alteration is an attitude characterized by excessive focus on the evaluation of body shape, and 4) Severe alteration in body perception is a significant change in how one perceives and evaluates their body image.

In the formation of body dissatisfaction in women, there are several factors underlying this condition. According to Paxton (Aswandi, 2023), there are four factors influencing body dissatisfaction, namely Biological and Physical Factor, which refers to biological characteristics and neurobiological disturbances that result in body disorientation, distortion of body perception, and bodily discomfort; Developmental Challenges of Puberty, which refers to hormonal changes; Sociocultural and Social Influences, which refer to cultural or subcultural norms that influence an

individual's way of thinking; and Individual Psychological and Cognitive Characteristics, which refer to the individual's tendency to engage in self-comparison with others.

Based on these previous definitions, body dissatisfaction can be understood as dissatisfaction and negative thoughts regarding body size and body shape that are perceived as non-ideal, consisting of four aspects, namely self perception of body shape, comparative perception of body image, attitude concerning body image alternation, and severe alteration in body perception.

2.2. Upward Comparison

According to Festinger (1954), social comparison refers to the behavior of comparing oneself with others, which arises from the individual's need for self-evaluation. Guyer and Johnston (2018) further explain that social comparison is a process in which individuals evaluate their abilities, opinions, attitudes, feelings, physical attributes, achievements, and other personal aspects in relation to others.

Social comparison occurs in two different directions, upward comparison and downward comparison. Festinger (1954) states that upward comparison takes place when individuals focus their attention on others who demonstrate greater achievements, success, or a more luxurious lifestyle, which can evoke negative emotions. Conversely, downward comparison occurs when individuals direct their attention toward others who are perceived as less successful or less fortunate, thereby fostering feelings of self-satisfaction and contentment

Megawati and Nurhayati (2022) state that upward comparison refers to the act of comparing oneself with individuals perceived as superior, whereas downward comparison refers to comparing oneself with individuals perceived as inferior. O'Brien, Caputi, Minto, Peoples, Hooper, Kell, and Sawley (2009) explain that individuals tend to compare their physical appearance with standards considered more attractive, which can trigger feelings of dissatisfaction with themselves.

According to Festinger (1954) There are three aspects of social comparison that encompass the dimension of upward comparison, namely 1) Evaluate opinions and abilities accurately, individuals evaluate their own opinions and abilities accurately; 2) Evaluate through comparisons with other people, sssessment is made by comparing oneself with other individuals; and 3) Prefer to compare with similar other, individuals tend to compare themselves with others who are similar in characteristics, such as age.

Festinger (1954) stated that there are three factors influencing social comparison, namely self-evaluation, which includes individuals' behavior in engaging in self-comparison with others with the motive of evaluating themselves; self-improvement, which includes comparison motives that position other individuals as role models to understand one's own abilities; and self-enhancement, which includes comparisons aimed at optimizing an individual's self-esteem or self-concept. Meanwhile, according to Garcia, Tor, and Schiff (2013), there are two factors influencing social comparison, namely individual factors, which include various aspects that individuals compare with others, and situational factors, which are social comparison factors that influence individuals who occupy similar positions.

Based on these definitions, upward comparison can be understood as a self-comparison conducted by individuals toward others who are considered better or more successful than themselves, consisting of three aspects, namely evaluate opinions and abilities accurately, evaluate through comparisons with other people, and prefer to compare with similar other.

3. Research Method

This study employed a quantitative correlational method to examine the effect of upward comparison on body dissatisfaction among female patients at aesthetic clinics. The sample consisted of 150 female aesthetic clinic patients selected using an incidental sampling technique. Data on upward comparison were collected using 10 items from the upward comparison dimension of The Upward and Downward Appearance Comparison Scale (UDACS).

Meanwhile, data on body dissatisfaction were obtained using 28 items from the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire–Appearance Scale (MBSRQ-AS), which measures the dimensions of appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, body area satisfaction, overweight preoccupation, and self-classified weight. Both scales were adapted from Usmar, Dewi, and Hamid (2022).

Data analysis was conducted through descriptive analysis to illustrate respondents' characteristics and inferential statistical analysis using simple linear regression to determine the effect of upward comparison on body dissatisfaction. All data analysis procedures were carried out using JASP software version 0.14.1.

4. Results and Discussions

The researcher collected responses from 150 female participants aged 18 to 25 years who had previously received or were currently receiving treatment at aesthetic clinics. The following presents the descriptive analysis results of the respondents based on demographic characteristics:

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis Results of Respondents

No	Demographic	Fruquency (N)	Percentage
1	Age:		
	a. 18 years	21	14%
	b. 19 years	22	14,67%
	c. 20 years	10	6,67%
	d. 21 years	34	22,67%
	e. 22 years	23	15,33%
	f. 23 years	20	13,33%
	g. 24 years	12	8%
	h. 25 years	8	5,33%
	Total	150	100%
2	Occupation:		
	a. Students	27	18%
	b. Private Employee	122	81,33%
	c. Entrepreneur	1	0,67%
	Total	7	100%

The data presented in table 1 show that 21 respondents (14%) were aged 18 years, 22 respondents (14.67%) were aged 19 years, 10 respondents (6.67%) were aged 20 years, 34 respondents (22.67%) were aged 21 years, 23 respondents (15.33%) were aged 22 years, 20 respondents (13.33%) were aged 23 years, 12 respondents (8%) were aged 24 years, and 8 respondents (5.3%) were aged 25 years. In terms of occupation, 27 respondents (18%) were students, 122 respondents (81.33%) were private employees, and 1 respondent (0.67%) was an entrepreneur.

Upon fulfilling the assumptions necessary for parametric analysis, hypothesis testing was carried out using simple linear regression analysis. If the significance value (p) is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), then H_1 is accepted and H_0 is rejected. The hypotheses of this study are as follows:

H_0 : There is no significant effect of upward comparison on body dissatisfaction among female aesthetic clinic patients.

H_1 : There is a significant effect of upward comparison on body dissatisfaction among female aesthetic clinic patients.

The results of the simple linear regression analysis in this study are presented as follows:

Table 2. Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis

	Model	df	F	p
H_1	Regression	1	35,185	< 0,001
	Residual	148		
	Total	149		

Table 3. Regression Coefficient

	Model	Unstandardized	R	R²	p
H ₀	(Intercept)	82,693			< 0,001
H ₁	(Intercept)	45,527	0,438	0,192	< 0,001
	<i>Upward Comparison</i>	1,261			< 0,001

Based on Table 2, the results show that there is a significant effect of upward comparison on body dissatisfaction among female aesthetic clinic patients, with $F(1,148) = 35.185, p < 0.001$. Table 3 indicates that upward comparison accounts for 19.2% of the variance in body dissatisfaction, while the remaining 80.8% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. The simple linear regression equation can be expressed as follows:

$$\text{Body dissatisfaction} = 45,427 + (1,261 \times \text{upward comparison})$$

Figure 1. Regression Equation of Research Variables

This means that every one-unit increase in upward comparison will increase body dissatisfaction by 1.261 units. Therefore, the higher the level of upward comparison experienced by female aesthetic clinic patients, the higher the level of body dissatisfaction they feel. Thus, H₁ in this study is accepted, and H₀ is rejected.

Based on the research findings, the upward comparison made by female aesthetic clinic patients can influence their level of body dissatisfaction. This finding supports Festinger’s (1954) social comparison theory, which explains that individuals have a natural drive to evaluate themselves by comparing with others. In this process, individuals tend to compare themselves with those perceived as better. Such comparisons create a perceived gap between the self and others, motivating individuals to make changes to reduce that gap. However, when the gap cannot be reduced, individuals tend to experience feelings of discomfort, dissatisfaction, and inferiority; ultimately leading to body dissatisfaction.

These results are consistent with the study conducted by Yulyanti and Gina (2025) on 100 early adult women Instagram users aged 20–24 years in East Jakarta. The study found a significant influence of social comparison on body dissatisfaction. Social comparison contributed an effective value of 30.1% to the increase in body dissatisfaction.

Another study conducted by Rahmawati, Putri, Harkina, and Lutfianawati (2025) involved 180 university students aged 18–25 years who were TikTok users in Bandar Lampung City. The research examined the simultaneous and partial effects of self-acceptance and social comparison on body dissatisfaction. The partial analysis revealed a positive influence of social comparison on body dissatisfaction. Social comparison contributed an effective value of 4% and a relative contribution of 29%. The positive direction of this influence was attributed to the dominance of the upward comparison aspect among the study’s respondents.

In addition, Rahma, Minarni, and Saudi (2024) conducted a study involving 549 late-adolescent females aged 15–19 years in Makassar City. The study found that social comparison negatively affected body dissatisfaction, with an effective contribution of 8.4%. The negative relationship was explained by the respondents’ tendency to engage in downward comparison.

A similar study by Megawati and Nurhayati (2022) involving 127 female students from the Faculty of Education, Yogyakarta State University (UNY) found a significant influence of social comparison on body image, with an effective contribution of 49%. Consistent with this finding, a study by Usmar, Dewi, and Hamid (2022) also revealed a negative effect of upward comparison on body image among adolescent social media users in Makassar City, with an effective contribution of 10%. This study involved 313 female participants aged 12–22 years. Both studies reinforce the current findings, indicating that the higher the level of social comparison, particularly upward comparison. The lower an individual’s body image, leading to increased body dissatisfaction.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study, supported by several previous studies, strengthen the evidence that upward comparison is one of the important psychological factors influencing body dissatisfaction. It can be concluded that upward comparison significantly predicts an increase in body dissatisfaction among female patients at aesthetic clinics. The

contribution of the upward comparison variable to body dissatisfaction among female aesthetic clinic patients is 19.2%, while the remaining 80.8% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

Based on the research conducted, several suggestions are proposed: (1) for women, especially aesthetic clinic patients, it is expected that they can manage their tendency for social comparison adaptively to improve satisfaction with their bodies; and (2) for future researchers, it is recommended to test the instruments used and to expand the scope of respondents and research variables in order to obtain stronger results.

References

- Aswandi, A. K. (2023). Pengaruh Peer Appearance Culture Terhadap Body Dissatisfaction Pada Mahasiswi Psikologi Universitas Medan Area. *Skripsi*. Medan. Fakultas Psikologi. Universitas Medan Area.
- Best, O. & Ban, S. (2021). Adolescence: Physical Changes and Neurological Development. *British Journal of Nursing*, 30 (5). 272-275.
- Candra, I. A. & Novianty, A. (2022). Hubungan antara Ketidakpuasan Bentuk Tubuh dengan Objektifikasi Diri pada Remaja Pengguna Instagram. *Jurnal Sains Psikologi*, 11 (1). 34-39.
- Dinata, R. O. & Pratama, M. (2022). Hubungan antara Social Comparison dengan Body Image Dewasa Awal Pengguna Media Sosial TikTok. *Ranah Research: Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 4 (3). 68-76.
- Festinger, L. (1954). A Theory of Social Comparison Processes. *Human Relations*, 7 (2), 117-140.
- Garcia, S. M., Tor, A., & Schiff, T. M. (2013). The Psychology of Competition: A Social Comparison Perspective. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 8 (6), 634-650.
- Hati, C. I. P. & Soetjningsih, C. H. (2022). Hubungan Self-Compassion dengan Body Dissatisfaction pada Dewasa Awal. *Jurnal Riset Aktual Psikologi*, 15 (2). 99-114.
- Humaira, M. P. & Aviani, Y. I. (2023). Pengaruh Social Comparison terhadap Body Dissatisfaction pada Perempuan Emerging Adulthood Pengguna Media Sosial di Sumatera Barat. *Jurnal Riset Psikologi*, 6 (2). 105-112.
- Jannah, M., Kamsani, S. R. & Ariffin, N. M. (2021). Perkembangan Usia Dewasa: Tugas dan Hambatan Pada Korban Konflik Pasca Damai. *Bunayya: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak*, 7 (2). 115-143.
- Lestari, S., Matulessi, A. & Pratitis, N. (2022). Ketidakpuasan Tubuh Mahasiswi: Bagaimana Peranan Harga Diri?. *Sukma: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi*, 3 (2). 218-226.
- Malau, B. F. A. & Rosito, A. C. (2023). Hubungan Body Image Terhadap Kepercayaan Diri Wanita Dewasa Awal. *Innovative: Journal of Social Science Research*, 3 (4). 6365-6408.
- Maulida, F. (2023). Hubungan Antara Body Dissatisfaction dan Personal Branding dengan Self Confidence pada Remaja Putri Pengguna Make-Up. *Skripsi*. Lampung. Fakultas Psikologi. Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan.
- Megawati, S. B. & Nurhayati, S. R. (2022). Pengaruh Perbandingan Sosial terhadap Body Image pada Mahasiswi. *Acta Psychologia*, 4 (2). 65-71.
- Najla, A. D. & Zulfiana, U. (2022). Pengaruh Social Comparison Terhadap Body Dissatisfaction pada Laki-laki Dewasa Awal Pengguna Instagram. *Cognicia*, 10 (1). 64-71.
- O' Brien, K., Caputi, P., Minto, R., Peoples, G., Hooper, C., Kell, S., & Sawley. (2009). Upward and Downward Physical Appearance Comparisons: Development of Scales and Examination of Predictive Qualities. *Body Image*, 6 (3). 201-206.
- Papalia, D. E. & Feldman, R. D. (2015). *Menyelami Perkembangan Manusia*. Jakarta: Salemba Humanika.
- Rahma, N., Minarni, M. & Saudi, A. N. A. (2024). Pengaruh Social Comparison Terhadap Body Dissatisfaction pada Perempuan Remaja Akhir di Kota Makassar. *Jurnal Psikologi Karakter*, 4 (2), 674-680.

- Rahmawati, I., Putri, A. M., Harkina, P. & Lutfianawati, D. (2025). Pengaruh Self-Acceptance dan Social Comparison Terhadap Kecenderungan Body Dissatisfaction Pada Mahasiswa Pengguna Sosial Media Tiktok. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manusia dan Kesehatan*, 8 (2), 505-519.
- Royani, I. & Berampu, L. T. (2022). Determinasi Perempuan dalam Membeli Produk Kecantikan di Klinik Aesthetic di Kota Medan. *Jurnal Ilmiah dan Manajemen dan Bisnis (JIMBI)*, 3 (1). 120-129.
- Santrock, J. W. (2012). *Life-Span Development 13th ed.* Jakarta: Penerbit Erlangga.
- Sari, D. I., Karsadi, & Pambudhi, Y. A. (2023). Social Comparison dan Body Dissatisfaction Remaja Perempuan. *Jurnal Sublimapsi*, 4 (1). 40-48.
- Semeer, S. Z. B. (2022). Pengaruh Social Comparison Terhadap Body Dissatisfaction Pengguna Instagram Pada Mahasiswi Fakultas Psikologi UIN Malang. *Skripsi*. Malang. Fakultas Psikologi. Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim.
- Stice, E. & Shaw, H. E. (2002). Role of Body Dissatisfaction in The Onset and Maintenance of Eating Pathology A Synthesis of Research Findings. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 53 (5). 985-993.
- Swari, N. K. E. P. & Tobing, D. H. (2024). Dampak Perbandingan Sosial pada Pengguna Media Sosial: Sebuah Kajian Literatur. *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan*, 10 (7). 853-863.
- Usmar, A. P. M., Dewi, E. M. P. & Hamid, H. (2022). Pengaruh Upward Comparison Terhadap Citra Tubuh Pada Remaja Perempuan Pengguna Sosial Media Di Kota Makassar. *PESHUM: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial dan Humaniora*, 1 (4), 269-180.
- Utami, T. (2019). Sistem Informasi Klinik Kecantikan pada Kartika Aesthetic di Bandar Lampung Berbasis Desktop dan SMS Gateway. *Skripsi*. Bandar Lampung. Fakultas Ilmu Komputer. Institut Informatika dan Bisnis Darmajaya.
- Yulyanti, W. D. & Gina, F. (2025). Pengaruh Perbandingan Sosial terhadap Ketidakpuasan Tubuh Pada Wanita Dewasa Awal Pengguna Instagram. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 9 (2), 26935-26942.
- Zahid, A., Ayu, N. A. K. & Ikayanti, R. L. (2023). Kapitalisme Tubuh Perempuan: Pendisiplinan atau Industrialisasi. *Resiprokal*, 5 (1). 115-131.
- ZAP. (2023). ZAP Beauty Index. Diakses pada tanggal 2 September 2024.