

The Influence of TikTok Media Exposure on Body Image and Self-Esteem in Adolescents

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Abstract

TikTok is among the most widely used social media platforms by adolescents, featuring unique elements such as algorithm-driven short videos and appearance enhancing filters that differentiate it from other platforms. These characteristics render TikTok particularly influential in shaping adolescents' perceptions of body image and self-esteem. This study aims to examine the impact of TikTok media exposure on body image and self-esteem among adolescents aged 15 to 18 years. A quantitative method was employed using multivariate linear regression analysis. The sample comprised 172 active TikTok users from Taruna Gajah Mada High School, Metro, Indonesia, with data collected through an online questionnaire. The instruments used included the Media and Technology Usage and Attitudes Scale (MTUAS), the Body Image Scale, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The results revealed that TikTok exposure significantly affected body image ($F = 98.697$; $p < 0.001$) and self-esteem ($F = 110.177$; $p < 0.001$), with a combined explained variance of 31.3%. Exposure to idealized body-related content fosters social comparison, adversely impacting adolescents' self-image and confidence. This study underscores the importance of digital literacy and psychosocial support in encouraging healthy social media use among adolescents. It concludes that TikTok exposure plays a substantial role in shaping how adolescents perceive their bodies and assess their self-worth, highlighting the media's influence on self-concept and psychological well-being.

Keywords: Adolescents, Body Image, Media Exposure, Self-Esteem, TikTok

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology has fundamentally transformed the way individuals interact and access information (Yulianti et al., 2023). One major outcome of this transformation is the pervasive use of social media, especially among adolescents. As one of the fastest-growing platforms, tiktok has become deeply embedded in the daily lives of teenagers (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022). This application is an entertainment medium and a space to express yourself, form your self-image, and interact socially. However, the high intensity of tiktok use also raises concerns about its impact on the psychological aspects of teenagers, especially those related to body perception and self-esteem (Conte et al., 2024). Visual social media such as TikTok can shape the way teenagers view their bodies because the nature of the content is repetitive, intense, and very easy to access (Re & Bruno, 2024).

Adolescence is a crucial developmental phase marked by the formation of self-identity, during which individuals are especially susceptible to external influences including those from social media (Spies et al., 2014). TikTok often promotes unrealistic beauty standards, encouraging constant comparison with idealized figures, which can result in body dissatisfaction and reduced self-confidence, particularly among teenage girls (Ebrahim & Tanner, 2023). The platform's filter effects, which alter physical appearance, normalize unattainable beauty ideals and may cause users who do not match these ideals to feel inferior (Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2025). These problems can develop into psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and eating disorders, which impact adolescents' mental health, academic performance, and social relationships (McLeod et al., 2012).

Self-esteem is another critical dimension of adolescent psychological development (Nabilla et al., 2024). Self-esteem reflects how individuals assess and value themselves. When teenagers are constantly exposed to content that displays ideal body standards, they can feel inadequate or not good enough (Isaksen & Roper, 2012). This causes a decline in self-esteem, which impacts their behavior, academic performance, and social interactions. Rosenberg (1965) defines self-esteem as an individual's assessment of himself, both positive and negative, which reflects the extent to which the individual feels valuable and accepted. Self-esteem: Low adolescent levels can lead to a tendency to withdraw from social environments, lose motivation to study, and experience deep emotional conflicts.

A preliminary study conducted at Taruna Gajah Mada High School in Metro, Indonesia, involved informal interviews with several female students. These students expressed dissatisfaction with their body image and reported frequently using TikTok filters to conceal perceived flaws. This uncontrolled social comparison appeared to diminish their self-confidence and prompted feelings of inferiority, stress, and social avoidance. These preliminary findings underscore the relevance and urgency of further empirical investigation into the psychological effects of TikTok.

Prior studies have demonstrated correlations between social media usage and body image or self-esteem. For instance, Martanatasha and Primadini (2019) found that Instagram use negatively influences adolescents' body image and self-esteem. Another study by Vuong et al. (2021) showed that exposure to idealized body representations slim or muscular on social media exacerbates dissatisfaction, particularly among individuals who internalize those ideals. Sagrera et al. (2022) also found that using TikTok for more than two hours daily can significantly increase the risk of body dissatisfaction. Research by Pop et al. (2022) found that there is a significant relationship between body image and self-esteem among Instagram social media users, showing that negative body perception can reduce an individual's self-esteem. Jamil (2024) revealed that social comparison and addiction to TikTok hurt the self-esteem of teens, especially when teens compare themselves to content that displays unrealistic beauty standards. Research by Rahmadiansyah et al. (2022) shows that low levels of adolescent girls using TikTok contribute to negative body perceptions, strengthening the relationship between self-esteem and body image among adolescent girls. These findings reinforce that social media platforms dominate visual content and play an essential role in shaping teenagers' body perceptions.

Despite these insights, most prior research has focused on dyadic relationships (e.g., media use and body image *or* self-esteem) using relatively simple correlational approaches. Few studies have investigated the simultaneous influence of media exposure on multiple psychological constructs. Here, the phrase "simple way" refers to the use of single-variable analyses that do not capture the interplay between related psychological outcomes. To address this gap, the present study adopts a multivariate linear regression design that simultaneously examines TikTok's impact on both body image and self-esteem two interrelated constructs shaped by shared influencing factors such as media exposure.

The urgency of this research lies in the increasing prevalence of body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem in adolescents who use social media intensively. TikTok, which is very popular and widely used among teenagers, has great potential to shape their self-perception, both positively and negatively. Therefore, it is important to understand the extent of the influence of TikTok use on the psychological aspects of adolescents so that appropriate preventive strategies can be developed. By understanding the risk factors associated with using TikTok, it is hoped that schools, families, and the community can take anticipatory steps to assist teenagers in interacting with social media. Apart from providing theoretical contributions to the media psychology literature, the results of this research are also expected to provide practical benefits. The findings from this study can be used by educators, counselors, and parents to understand the importance of media literacy in guiding teenagers to use social media healthily. Good digital literacy can help teenagers filter the information they consume and develop a critical attitude towards content that can affect their self-image. The role of education is very strategic in instilling positive values about body diversity and forming healthy self-esteem from an early age.

This research aims to simultaneously analyze the extent of media influence on TikTok against body image and self-esteem in teenagers. The hypotheses in this research are: (1) there is a significant influence between the media *exposure* TikTok against *body image*; (2) there is a significant influence between the media *exposure* TikTok against *self-esteem*; (3) there is a simultaneous significant influence between the media *exposure* TikTok against *body image* And *self-esteem*; (4) there is a significant influence between *body image* to *self-esteem* teenager; and (5) there are differences in influence *media exposure* TikTok against *body image* And *self-esteem* based on gender. It is hoped that the results of this research can be a basis for designing educational policies and counseling guidance programs that are adaptive to digital challenges, as well as providing an in-depth understanding of social media's role in shaping teenagers' psychological aspects. With this understanding, teenagers are expected to be able to use social media constructively to support positive self-development and not make it a source of psychological pressure.

METHODS

Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a Multivariate General Linear Model (GLM) design to examine the simultaneous influence of TikTok media exposure on adolescents' body image and self-esteem. The research was conducted over a period of three months, from January to March 2025.

Participants

The participants in this study were students aged 15-18 years from Taruna Gajah Mada High School in Metro, Indonesia, who actively used the TikTok platform. The total population consisted of 303 students. Using simple random sampling and the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, a sample of 172 participants was obtained. Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. For students under 18 years of age, parental or guardian consent was also collected. This study received ethical approval from from Taruna Gajah Mada High School in Metro.

Instruments

Media and Technology Usage and Attitudes Scale (MTUAS). Developed by Rosen et al. (2013), this scale assesses the frequency and attitudes toward media use, particularly social media platforms such as TikTok. The version used in this study consists of 35 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1

(Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). A sample item includes: *"I feel anxious when I cannot access TikTok."* This scale demonstrated strong internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha = 0.93.

Body Image Scale. Adapted from Hannah (2018), this scale measures adolescents' perception of their body image. The scale consists of 13 items, using a 5-point Likert format. Sample item: *"I am satisfied with the way my body looks."* The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.696, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Originally developed by Rosenberg (1965), this scale assesses global self-esteem through 10 items (e.g., *"On the whole, I am satisfied with myself."*). Responses are given on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Construct validity was confirmed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and the reliability in this study was Cronbach's alpha = 0.696.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using a self-administered online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. To ensure accuracy and sincerity in responses, data collection was supervised by each participant's homeroom teacher. Prior to data collection, the researchers conducted on-site observations to understand the media consumption context of the students.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25.0. Before the main analysis, assumption tests were carried out, including Normality test (Kolmogorov Smirnov), Linearity test (ANOVA), Heteroscedasticity test (scatter plot), Autocorrelation test (Durbin Watson). Hypotheses were tested using a Multivariate General Linear Model (GLM) approach with two dependent variables (body image and self-esteem) and one independent variable (TikTok media exposure). Additional analysis using Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine gender-based differences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Before entering the primary analysis, a series of prerequisite tests were carried out to ensure the suitability of the statistical model used. The test includes a normality test (using Kolmogorov-Smirnov), a linearity test (with ANOVA), an autocorrelation test (using Durbin-Watson), as well as a heteroscedasticity test (with scatter plot). The test results show that the data meets all the assumptions of multivariate linear regression, which are attached in Tables 1 to 4.

Table 1. Normality test results

Variable	Test Statistics	Sig. (P)	Information
Body Image	Shapiro Wilk	< 0.05	Abnormal
Self-Esteem	Shapiro Wilk	< 0.05	Abnormal

Table 2. Linearity test results

Variable	F Linearity	Sig. Linearity	F. Deviation	Sig. Deviation	Linearity
Body Image	145.181	0.000	5.386	0.000	Linear
Self-Esteem	161.991	0.000	5.379	0.000	Linear

An analysis of the effects between subjects is carried out to see the contribution of each dependent variable. The results show that the media *exposure* TikTok significantly influences *body image* with a value of $F(1,298) = 98.697$ and *Partial Eta Squared* of 0.249. Meanwhile, on *self-esteem*, it obtained a value of $F(1,298) = 110.177$ with *Partial Eta Squared* of 0.270. This shows that TikTok significantly influences how teenagers view their bodies and assess themselves, as shown in Table 5.

Table 3. Results of Heteroscedasticity and Autocorrelation Tests

Variable	Visual Results	Information
Body Image	Residual histogram resembles a normal curve; Durbin-Watson is within reasonable limits	Assumptions met
Self-Esteem	Residual histogram resembles a normal curve; Durbin-Watson is within reasonable limits	Assumptions met

Table 5. Effect of TikTok Media Exposure on Body Image and Self-Esteem

Dependent Variable	F (1,298)	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Body Image	98.697	<0.001	0.249
Self-Esteem	110.177	<0.001	0.270

An observed power value of 1,000 for all analyses indicates a very high test power level, so there is little chance of a Type II error (failing to detect a real effect). These findings indicate that exposure to TikTok content has a strong influence on the formation of adolescents' self-image and self-esteem.

Even though it shows significant results, this research has limitations because it was only conducted at one school using an online survey method. Therefore, it is recommended that further research be conducted with a broader scope, a mixed methods approach, and including qualitative aspects to understand media content and narratives in more depth.

This research aims to determine the influence of TikTok's media exposure on body image and self-esteem in teenagers. To answer the proposed hypothesis, data analysis was carried out using a multivariate General Linear Model (GLM) approach, with two dependent variables, namely *body image* and *self-esteem*, and one independent variable, namely media *exposure* to TikTok.

To test significant differences simultaneously between dependent variables based on the independent variables studied, analysis was carried out using Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). The following table presents the statistical results of multivariate tests based on four criteria, namely Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root.

Table 6. Analysis: Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

Test Statistics	F	df	Sig. (p)	Partial Eta Squared	Information
Pillai's Trace	67.572	(2; 297)	< 0.001	0.313	Significant
Wilks' Lamda	0.687	(2; 297)	< 0.001	0.313	Significant
Hotelling's Trace	0.455	(2; 297)	< 0.001	0.313	Significant
Roy's Largest Rock	0.455	(2; 297)	< 0.001	0.313	Significant

Based on the MANOVA results in Table 6, the four test statistics show very high significance values ($p < 0.001$), which means significant multivariate differences between groups based on the combination of

dependent variables analyzed. The Partial Eta Squared value of 0.313 indicates that the independent variables can explain approximately 31.3% of the combined variance of the dependent variables, reflecting a medium to significant effect. These four statistical indices mutually confirm the same results, although each has different sensitivity to certain assumptions. In general, Wilks' Lambda is the most commonly used statistic, and its results show value $\lambda = 0.687$, with $p < 0.001$, which indicates that the model including the independent variables is significantly better at predicting the combination of dependent variables than the model without these independent variables.

Further analysis was carried out on each dependent variable. The Between-Subjects Effects test results show that the media exposure TikTok significantly influences body image with $F(1, 298) = 98.697$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = 0.249$. This means that as much as 24.9% of the variation in teenagers' body image perceptions is influenced by the level of exposure to TikTok. Apart from that, the media *exposure* TikTok also significantly influences self-esteem, with $F(1, 298) = 110.177$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = 0.270$. This suggests that exposure to TikTok explains 27% of teenagers' self-esteem variance.

Table 7. Test Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable	F	df	p	Partial
Body Image	98.697	(1, 298)	< .001	0.249
Self-Esteem	110.177	(1, 298)	< .001	0.270

Table 7 shows that TikTok content impacts how teens view their bodies and influence their self-esteem. In the context of psychological development, this implies that adolescents who are more frequently exposed to appearance-based content or ideal standards on TikTok are more susceptible to experiencing impaired self-perception and decreased self-esteem. Descriptively, the average score for body image is at a value of $M = 3.14$ ($SD = 0.55$). In contrast, self-esteem has a mean of $M = 3.35$ ($SD = 0.46$), indicating that, in general, adolescents have a positive perception of their body and self-esteem, although there is relatively homogeneous variation.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that exposure to TikTok media significantly influences both body image and self-esteem among adolescents. These results are consistent with previous literature and reinforce concerns about the psychological impact of visual-oriented social media platforms.

Influence Media Exposure TikTok against Body Image Teenagers

The analysis results show that the media exposure TikTok significantly influences body image, with a value of $F(1, 298) = 98.697$ and a significance level of $p < 0.001$. This value confirms that the relationship between the independent variables and body image does not occur by chance, but rather shows a consistent and strong relationship. Furthermore, the Partial Eta Squared value of 0.249 indicates that around 24.9% of the variance in perception of body image in teenagers can be explained by how high their exposure to TikTok is. In the context of social and psychological research, this figure is included in the medium to large influence category, which means that social media such as TikTok substantially contributes to shaping teenagers' perceptions of their bodies.

Body image is a psychological construct susceptible to being influenced by visual media, especially during adolescence, a crucial period in identity development (Alamyar & Khotimah, 2023). As a short video-based platform, TikTok often displays content oriented towards physical appearance, such as fashion trends,

beauty hacks, make-up tutorials, and body transformations (Rahmadiansyah et al., 2022). This kind of content can raise beauty standards that are not always realistic, thereby encouraging teenagers to make social comparisons. If teenagers feel that they do not conform to these standards, this can hurt their body image.

Influence Media Exposure TikTok against Self-Esteem Teenagers

Media exposure on TikTok also significantly influences self-esteem, namely with a value of $F(1, 298) = 110.177$ and a significance value of $p < 0.001$ (Cai, 2023). These results again strengthen the idea that exposure to TikTok content positively or negatively correlates with adolescents' self-esteem (Meng, 2023). A Partial Eta Squared value of 0.270 implies that 27% of the variance in self-esteem can be explained by variables, such as media exposure to TikTok (Cai, 2023). This figure is even slightly higher than the influence on body image, meaning that the impact of TikTok content on how teens value and value themselves is even more significant (Meng, 2023). Teenagers who often see content that emphasizes achievement, popularity, perfect appearance, or an ideal lifestyle may experience a decrease in self-confidence if they feel they cannot "match" what they see. On the other hand, positive content, such as self-motivation, body positivity campaigns, or honest experiences from other users, can also encourage increased self-esteem if consumed healthily and critically (Baker & Rojek, 2020).

The results indicate that TikTok media exposure significantly affects both body image and self-esteem among adolescents (Alamyar & Khotimah, 2023). The observed power of 1.000 in both tests confirms the high reliability of the statistical analysis and suggests a very low probability of Type II error. With R^2 values of 0.249 for body image and 0.270 for self-esteem, the model explains a considerable portion of the variance in both outcomes, though other contributing factors beyond TikTok exposure are likely.

These findings illustrate the psychological salience of TikTok as a platform that not only entertains but also shapes adolescents' perceptions of self and others (Barta & Andalibi, 2021). As adolescents engage with highly curated and appearance-focused content, their self-image becomes increasingly susceptible to external validation and comparison (Wong & McLellan, 2024).

The association between TikTok use and body image dissatisfaction supports Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954), which posits that individuals evaluate themselves relative to others. Adolescents exposed to idealized portrayals of beauty may internalize unrealistic standards, leading to lower body satisfaction a pattern observed by Vuong et al. (2021) and Sagrera et al. (2022), particularly among girls with high exposure durations.

Likewise, the impact on self-esteem is consistent with the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch), which suggests that media is used to fulfill emotional and identity-related needs (Bhatiasevi, 2024). However, when used for social validation, especially in an environment that promotes perfectionism and popularity metrics (likes, views), self-worth can be compromised (Dingemans et al., 2023).

This study also reinforces the importance of digital literacy as a protective factor. Adolescents with the ability to critically interpret and filter digital content are better equipped to mitigate the negative psychological effects of social media. Consequently, collaboration among parents, educators, and school counselors is vital to fostering media resilience and promoting healthy online behaviour (Chassiakos et al., 2016).

From a theoretical perspective, this research highlights the need to understand media exposure not merely as an external stimulus but as a force that interacts with internal psychological processes (Valkenburg et al., 2016). These results open opportunities for developing integrative models that examine how media visuals, social interaction, and value internalization jointly influence adolescents' self-concept in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore how exposure to TikTok affects adolescent body image and self-esteem. Findings from the multivariate regression analysis show that media exposure from TikTok significantly influences these two aspects, with a contribution of 24.9% to body image and 27% to self-esteem, and explaining the total variation of 31.3%. This means that the more frequently teens are exposed to TikTok content, the greater the likelihood of changes in how they view their bodies and value themselves. These results are consistent with media psychology theories such as cultivation theory, social comparison, and uses and gratifications theory, which emphasize the role of media in shaping social perceptions and self-concept. However, this research has a number of limitations, such as the narrow scope of the location, potential bias from self-report questionnaires, and no grouping of the types of TikTok content studied. Therefore, further studies are recommended to cover a broader and more diverse area, using a mixed approach (mixed methods), as well as including analysis of mediating or moderating variables such as gender, intensity of use, content type, and motivation for using TikTok to gain a deeper understanding.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Mita Yunani contributed to the research conceptualization, instrument development, data collection, and initial drafting of the manuscript. Ika Ariyati led the methodological design, instrument validation, data analysis, and manuscript revision as the corresponding author. Kus Hendar was responsible for statistical analysis, data interpretation, and critical review of the discussion. Faridah Pardi, Emi Pupita Dewi, and Nera Leiya Maisuri supervised the research process and provided substantial input during the final review. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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