
The Influence of Social Pressure and Beauty Standards on Women's Identity and Self-Esteem in the Context of Modernity

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze how social pressure and beauty standards shaped by modernity influence women's identity and self-esteem. The focus is on the role of social media and popular culture in constructing beauty standards among women aged 17–30 years. This research employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive method and a case study strategy. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews with four informants, and relevant literature review. The findings reveal that social media platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok, act as primary agents in shaping homogeneous and visually oriented beauty standards. These standards generate social pressure that encourages women to conform to prevailing expectations. The internalization process occurs when external standards are adopted as part of self-evaluation, affecting confidence and body perception. However, women are not entirely passive, as they actively negotiate their identities through selective adaptation, personal interpretation, and resistance. The study highlights that beauty is a complex social construct closely linked to power relations, media representation, and identity formation in the digital era. This research contributes to communication, gender, and cultural studies, while also promoting awareness of embracing diverse forms of beauty.

Keywords

Beauty Standards; Identity; Women; Social Media

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of globalization, supported by advances in information and communication technology, has brought significant changes to various aspects of people's lives. The rapid flow of information enables individuals to access diverse knowledge, cultures, and social values from different parts of the world without geographical limitations. These advancements have generated positive impacts, including improved quality of life, expanded access to education, and the growth of employment opportunities and gender equality across various sectors of life (Yanti et al., 2026). On the other hand, globalization has also transformed the way people construct perceptions, identities, and patterns of social interaction. Communication processes occurring through digital media have become the primary means of disseminating various values and ideologies that develop globally. Messages



continuously received through media possess the ability to influence how individuals understand the social reality around them. This phenomenon indicates that communication functions not only as a process of information transmission but also plays a role in shaping meaning and the way society perceives various social issues.

The development of digital communication technology has transformed societal communication patterns from conventional forms into more interactive and participatory ones. The presence of social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok enables every individual to become both a producer and a consumer of messages simultaneously. The visual-based characteristics of social media make these platforms effective spaces for constructing images, identities, and social representations. Various forms of content disseminated through social media function not only as entertainment but also as instruments for shaping public opinion and perception. One issue that has received considerable attention within the digital communication space concerns women's beauty. Various symbols, images, videos, and narratives related to beauty are continuously produced and disseminated massively to audiences. This situation demonstrates that social media has evolved into a communication arena that plays a role in shaping and distributing meanings of beauty within society.

The phenomenon of beauty in the digital era can no longer be understood merely as an aesthetic matter but must also be viewed as the result of ongoing communication processes. Various messages concerning the ideal body, fashion styles, skin color, and particular facial features are communicated through diverse media platforms, thereby shaping collective perceptions regarding beauty standards. This process operates through mechanisms of representation that enable media to present certain realities while excluding others. As a result, society receives depictions of beauty that tend to be uniform and standardized. These standards subsequently become reference points for evaluating oneself and others. From a communication perspective, this phenomenon reflects a process of meaning construction carried out through media messages. Ultimately, beauty is no longer understood as a personal concept but becomes part of a social reality constructed through communication.

The phenomenon of beauty has gained widespread attention in society through beauty pageants, which have developed as part of global culture. This phenomenon not only highlights women's physical appearance but also represents various social values, cultural norms, and collective identities that evolve within society (Hamzah & Afrizal, 2026). Beauty pageants function as communication media that convey messages regarding the characteristics of women considered ideal by society. Various symbols, attributes, and narratives presented in such events shape particular understandings of the meaning of beauty. The presence of beauty pageants also illustrates how media contribute to disseminating social values related to women's bodies and appearance (Prastiwi & Rahman, 2026). Beauty is subsequently positioned as something highly valuable and becomes an

important component of social identity in modern life (Rahmawati, 2025). This situation demonstrates that communication plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of female beauty.

Contemporary women tend to view beauty as one of the elements associated with the formation of self-identity and social acceptance (Andini et al., 2026). This perspective does not emerge naturally but is influenced by various messages received through both social environments and communication media. Beauty norms that develop in Indonesia contribute to the formation of certain standards that are frequently used as benchmarks for evaluating women (Ayu & Kusuma, 2026). Repeated exposure to messages about beauty causes these standards to be accepted as normal and legitimate. Consequently, beauty is no longer understood as an individual preference but has evolved into a social measure used in various societal interactions (S. A. Sari et al., 2025). When individuals feel unable to meet these existing standards, various forms of pressure emerge that may affect how they perceive themselves (Izdihar et al., 2026). This phenomenon indicates that communication makes a substantial contribution to shaping women's identities and self-perceptions.

Social media plays a significant role in shaping and reinforcing public perceptions of beauty. Digital platforms enable various representations of ideal bodies and particular lifestyles to be disseminated rapidly, widely, and repeatedly to audiences (Dewi & Sugiarti, 2025). Content featuring women with attractive appearances, proportional body shapes, and modern lifestyles has become part of society's daily media consumption (Simanjuntak & Dewi, 2026). Through continuous communication processes, such content forms a shared understanding of the characteristics considered beautiful in women. Instagram and TikTok serve not only as channels for information dissemination but also as spaces for the formation of social media discourse on beauty. This discourse develops through user-generated content, comments, digital interactions, and various other forms of communication occurring within virtual spaces (Fajri, 2026). These conditions demonstrate that social media functions as a communication arena that simultaneously produces and reproduces beauty standards within society.

Communication studies maintain that media messages not only depict reality but also construct reality itself through processes of representation. Beauty pageants and various forms of digital content concerning women serve as examples of how media represent gender and beauty to audiences. Such representations are not limited to physical appearance but also contain messages regarding nationalism, morality, tradition, and modernization that develop within society (Indriyani & Afrizal, 2026). These messages are received and interpreted by audiences, thereby shaping particular perceptions of the ideal woman. This phenomenon demonstrates that beauty is the result of communication processes involving media, culture, and society simultaneously. Various representations appearing in media subsequently create social expectations that influence individual behavior in everyday life. This situation highlights the importance of examining beauty standards from a communication perspective, particularly in

relation to media representation, digital communication, and social media discourse (Aisyah et al., 2025).

A feminist approach represents one of the most relevant perspectives for understanding how women are represented in various forms of communication media. Feminist scholarship explains that media often position women as visual objects evaluated primarily on the basis of physical appearance rather than intellectual capacity or social contribution (Pribadi, 2026). Such representations are disseminated through various communication channels, including advertisements, television, magazines, and social media, all of which have become integral parts of everyday life. Messages presented repeatedly eventually shape understandings of how women are expected to appear and behave in public spaces (Anggita & Kusuma, 2026). Choices related to clothing, the use of beauty products, and personal appearance are often influenced by social expectations constructed through media communication (N. P. Sari & Aisah, 2026). Women subsequently strive to conform to prevailing standards in order to gain social acceptance from their surrounding environments (Karyadi, 2025). This phenomenon demonstrates that media function not only as channels of information but also as institutions that produce and disseminate meanings concerning women's identities.

Efforts to meet beauty standards are closely related to social communication processes occurring within society. Various messages regarding the ideal body, skin color, facial features, and particular styles of dress continue to be reproduced through media and popular culture, thereby shaping collective perceptions of beauty (Oktaviani & Wulandari, 2025). The standards that emerge generally include a proportional body, fair skin, long hair, and certain physical characteristics considered more attractive than others (Hardita & Fitriani, 2026). These messages indirectly create mechanisms of social evaluation directed toward individuals. Beauty subsequently develops into a social symbol used to measure a person's self-worth in various social interactions (Atiqah et al., 2025). Women who do not conform to dominant standards frequently experience social pressure and negative judgments from their surrounding environments. This condition demonstrates that communication plays a major role in both shaping and maintaining beauty standards within society.

The construction of beauty cannot be separated from the role of mass media as communication agents that continuously produce and reproduce meaning. Media utilize various symbols, signs, and narratives to construct particular representations of women and beauty (Adzani et al., 2026). These representations are then accepted by society as realities considered normal and ideal. This phenomenon forms part of popular culture, which has extensive reach and the capacity to influence large audiences. The large-scale production of popular culture has resulted in the standardization of various aspects of life, including definitions of female beauty (Azizah et al., 2026). Although intended to reach broader audiences, this process often overlooks the diversity of identities existing within society. Consequently,

groups that do not conform to dominant standards may experience marginalization in both social and media spaces.

In addition to being influenced by media and popular culture, interpretations of beauty cannot be separated from the religious values that develop within society. From the perspective of Islamic communication, individuals are not evaluated solely on the basis of their physical appearance as displayed in public but also according to their moral and spiritual qualities. This perspective becomes increasingly important as modern media place greater emphasis on visual aspects as the primary measure for evaluating individuals. Islam offers a more balanced viewpoint regarding the relationship between appearance, identity, and human worth. One of the foundations for understanding this phenomenon is found in Qur'an Surah Al-A'raf verse 26, which states:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي سِوَاتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا ۗ وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ
ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ

"O children of Adam! We have indeed provided for you clothing to cover your nakedness and as an adornment. But the clothing of righteousness—that is best. That is among the signs of Allah so that they may take heed.." Q.S Al-A'raf ayat 26 (Kemenag RI, 2022)

This verse indicates that Islam acknowledges the human need to maintain a good appearance as part of social identity. However, the Qur'an also emphasizes that human value is not determined solely by physical aspects visible to others. This message is highly relevant to contemporary digital communication phenomena, where social media tend to present visual images as the primary means of gaining social recognition. The perspective of Islamic communication teaches that messages constructed within the public sphere should promote respect for human dignity in its entirety. This value differs from certain media representations that frequently place the body and physical appearance at the center of social evaluation (Djaelani & Akbar, 2025). Beauty should not be understood as something uniform that must be achieved by every individual; rather, it should be recognized as part of the diversity inherent in human creation (Ifa et al., 2025). This understanding demonstrates that Islamic communication can serve as a foundation for developing a more inclusive narrative regarding women's beauty in the digital era.

The standardization process that develops within popular culture creates limitations on how society understands and interprets beauty. Media utilize specific symbols, signs, and ideologies to construct representations of social reality that are subsequently accepted by audiences as normal and natural (Rizki et al., 2026). These representations influence the way society perceives women and determine the characteristics considered ideal (Damayanti & Chairil, 2025). In many cases, women are positioned as visual objects that are widely consumed through various media platforms. As a result,

women's identities are more frequently evaluated based on physical attributes rather than the social, intellectual, or spiritual dimensions they possess. These dimensions are often overlooked in communication processes occurring through mass media and social media. This condition demonstrates that media possess significant power in shaping meaning while simultaneously limiting the ways society understands women's identities (Wilmanda & Hariyanti, 2025).

Women's identities in the digital era have undergone transformation due to the intensity of media communication in everyday life. Television, magazines, the internet, and social media have become the primary channels for disseminating various definitions of beauty to society (Indriani et al., 2025). The representations presented are often homogeneous and tend to direct audiences toward particular standards considered ideal. Repeated exposure to such messages has the potential to influence how women perceive themselves. From the perspective of communication effects, media messages are capable of shaping individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward their bodies and identities. The social pressure resulting from such exposure may affect self-confidence and generate dissatisfaction with one's body (Novita, 2025). This phenomenon demonstrates that women's identities and self-esteem are influenced not only by personal factors but also by communication processes occurring within digital spaces.

Changes in beauty standards in Indonesia are also influenced by intercultural communication that has developed alongside the process of globalization. Values originating from Western cultures enter through various media channels and subsequently interact with local cultures that have long developed within society (Angelika & Pandrianto, 2025). On the other hand, Indonesian society possesses rich cultural diversity that offers various unique and non-uniform definitions of beauty (Nisa & Japar, 2025). Some women adopt global beauty standards because they are perceived as more modern and aligned with contemporary trends (Wiana & Puspita, 2025). These local values reflect a rich and diverse cultural identity (Pakpahan & Fajriyah, 2025). The interaction between global and local cultures subsequently generates an ongoing process of identity negotiation. This situation demonstrates that communication serves as an important means of shaping, maintaining, and transforming meanings associated with beauty within society.

Based on the foregoing discussion, it can be understood that beauty standards are not merely issues of gender, psychology, or culture, but also constitute a communication phenomenon shaped through media representation and digital interaction. Previous studies have primarily examined beauty standards from the perspectives of feminism, psychology, and popular culture. Research that connects media representation, digital communication, social media discourse, communication effects, and the perspective of Islamic communication remains relatively limited. In fact, social media has become the primary space for producing, disseminating, and reinforcing various discourses surrounding women's

beauty. This gap highlights the importance of research that integrates communication perspectives and Islamic values in understanding the phenomenon of beauty standards. This study aims to analyze how media, social pressure, and globalization shape women's perceptions of beauty and influence their identities and self-esteem. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of communication studies, Islamic communication, gender studies, and media literacy in the digital era, while simultaneously encouraging greater public awareness regarding the importance of embracing the diversity of beauty.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to understand communication phenomena related to the construction of women's beauty standards in the digital era. A descriptive approach was selected because it is capable of providing a systematic depiction of communication processes, media representations, and social interactions occurring within digital spaces (Sugiyono, 2023). Qualitative research enables researchers to explore the meanings constructed by individuals when interacting with various messages about beauty disseminated through social media. The focus of the study was directed not only toward women's experiences as message recipients but also toward how digital communication shapes perceptions, attitudes, and interpretations of beauty standards. This study views social media as a communication space that produces and reproduces various discourses concerning women's bodies, appearance, and identities. The qualitative approach also provides opportunities to understand how media messages interact with social, cultural, and religious values that develop within society (Creswell, 2016). This approach is considered relevant for analyzing digital communication phenomena that cannot be adequately explained solely through quantitative measurement.

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on criteria aligned with the objectives of the study. The informants were chosen from women aged 17–30 years because this age range represents active social media users with high levels of exposure to various forms of digital beauty content. All informants were active users of Instagram and TikTok, which serve as the primary platforms for disseminating beauty representations and visual trends in the digital era (Rahmana & Damaiyanti, 2025). In addition to being active social media users, the informants had experience interacting with content related to body image, fashion, beauty trends, and standards of female appearance. These characteristics were considered capable of providing relevant information regarding how media messages are consumed, interpreted, and negotiated in everyday life. The selection of informants also took into account the diversity of experiences in dealing with beauty representations circulating on social media. The profiles of the research informants are presented in Table 1 below..

Table 1 Research Informants

No	Informant Name	Age	Social Media Activity	Criteria Related to Beauty Standards
1	Salsabila Hadiyanti	23	Active on Instagram & TikTok	Has experienced body image pressure
2	Lita Octaviani	25	Active on Instagram & TikTok	Influenced by beauty standards on social media
3	Rizka Maisarah	26	Active on Instagram & TikTok	Concerned with fashion trends and the ideal body
4	Sri Nurhayati	26	Active on Instagram & TikTok	Adjusts appearance according to popular trends

Source: Researcher, 2026

The research strategy employed was a case study approach because it enables researchers to obtain an in-depth understanding of communication phenomena occurring within a particular group (Aprinawati et al., 2025). Data collection was conducted through observations of various beauty representations appearing on social media, particularly Instagram and TikTok, as the primary spaces of digital communication. Observations were also directed toward forms of user interaction, such as posts, comments, visual symbols, and discourses related to female beauty. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured in-depth interviews aimed at exploring informants' experiences in receiving, interpreting, and responding to messages concerning beauty circulating in digital media (Islamiyah & Aini, 2025). In addition, this study utilized documentation and literature reviews from scientific journals, books, and previous studies relevant to digital communication, media representation, and Islamic communication. Data analysis was conducted through the processes of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing in order to identify communication patterns that contribute to social pressure on women. The validity of the data was strengthened through source triangulation and method triangulation techniques by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and literature reviews, thereby producing more comprehensive findings (Zhafirah & Damaiyanti, 2025)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Construction of Beauty Standards in Social Media and Popular Culture

The development of social media has brought about a major transformation in the way society interprets beauty, particularly among young women (Kumara et al., 2025). Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok function not only as communication media but also as spaces of symbolic production that shape particular aesthetic standards. Visual content displayed repeatedly creates uniform patterns of representation, which are gradually accepted as "normal" social realities (Utami et al., 2025). These representations generally emphasize slim bodies, fair skin, symmetrical faces, and fashion styles that follow global trends (Azis et al., 2025). This process demonstrates that beauty is not something natural but rather the result of a continuously produced social construction (Kania, 2025). Furthermore, social

media algorithms reinforce the distribution of similar content based on user preferences, thereby limiting the diversity of representations that appear. This condition positions social media as a highly influential agent in shaping collective perceptions of beauty (Mardiyah & Hanifah, 2025). Interview findings indicate that informants actively and passively use social media as a reference in understanding beauty standards. Salsabila Hadiyanti revealed that continuous exposure to visual content influences the way she perceives herself. She stated:

"When I am scrolling, almost everything that appears is women who seem 'perfect,' from their bodies and faces to the way they dress. At first, I viewed it merely as entertainment, but over time I began to wonder whether beauty really has to look like that and whether other people judge me according to the same standards." (Interview with Salsabila Hadiyanti, Informant, 2026).

This statement demonstrates that media consumption does not stop at the stage of viewing but continues through a process of self-reflection. Consistent visual exposure creates standards that are gradually internalized as ideal benchmarks. This situation illustrates that social media possesses the ability to shape perceptions unconsciously (Hanifah & Halimah, 2025). The process occurs repeatedly and becomes part of individuals' digital routines. As a consequence, individuals begin to construct expectations about themselves based on the representations they encounter. Rizka Maisarah also highlighted how the dynamics of trends on social media create beauty standards that are constantly changing and difficult to follow. She explained,

"Every time I open TikTok, there is always a new trend, from makeup and outfits to posing styles. Sometimes I try them not because I genuinely like them, but because I feel that if I do not follow them, I will be left behind. There is a fear of being considered unattractive or not up to date if I do not keep up with those trends. (Interview with Rizka Maisarah, Informant, 2026)

This statement indicates that social media not only constructs standards but also creates pressure for individuals to continuously adapt. Rapidly changing trends make beauty standards dynamic while still directing users toward uniform patterns (Rahmalia & Saputro, 2025). This condition requires women to constantly adjust themselves in order to remain relevant within digital social environments. This phenomenon is consistent with the findings of Manzil (2025) who argues that social media increases individuals' tendency to engage in intensive social comparison. Such pressure does not always emerge explicitly but is experienced through interactions and expectations that develop over time. This reinforces the role of media as a socialization agent in establishing new norms. Popular culture disseminated through digital media further strengthens the construction of beauty standards in subtle yet systematic ways. Representations of women in digital content tend to place visual appearance at the center of attention, causing individual value to be frequently reduced to physical appearance. Lita Octaviani revealed that she often compares her appearance with figures she sees on social media. She

stated,

"I often see influencers who always look neat and attractive, from the way they dress to their body shapes. Sometimes I realize that it is only part of the content, but unconsciously I still compare myself to them, especially when I feel that I do not match the standards I often see" (Interview, Lita Octaviani, informant, 2026).

This statement demonstrates that popular culture does not merely provide entertainment but also shapes social expectations. The process of social comparison becomes an inseparable part of media consumption. This finding is consistent with Felensia (2025) who found that exposure to idealized images on social media can increase body dissatisfaction. This condition illustrates how media play a role in shaping individuals' visual aspirations. As a result, women tend to evaluate themselves according to external standards. Sri Nurhayati further added that contemporary beauty standards have become increasingly concrete and difficult to avoid. She explained,

"Nowadays, there seems to be a clear picture of what beauty should look like, such as having clear skin, a proportional body, and a fashion style that follows current trends. If we do not come close to that image, it feels as though something is lacking, especially when reading comments on social media where people often judge appearance directly." (Interview, Sri Nurhayati, informant, 2026).

This statement indicates that social media not only constructs standards but also creates spaces for public evaluation. Comments and responses from other users reinforce the legitimacy of existing standards. This process establishes a mechanism of collective social control. The phenomenon aligns with the concept of self-surveillance in feminist studies, which explains how individuals begin to monitor themselves according to prevailing standards (Safira & Abrian, 2025). Women become not only the objects of evaluation but also subjects who continuously evaluate themselves. This process occurs repeatedly and shapes behavioral patterns.

Moreover, the role of social media algorithms further reinforces the dominance of particular beauty standards (Revilina & Ningsih, 2025). Content displaying ideal bodies and certain lifestyles tends to receive greater engagement and is therefore recommended more frequently to users. This condition creates what is referred to as a filter bubble, in which individuals are continuously exposed to similar types of content (Citra et al., 2025). Informants acknowledged that they rarely encounter representations of beauty that differ from mainstream standards on social media. This strengthens the perception that such standards are universal. In reality, however, these standards are social constructions influenced by cultural and industrial interests. This phenomenon demonstrates that social media are not neutral but rather possess an ideological role in shaping social reality. Consequently, the diversity of beauty becomes less visible within digital spaces.

The construction of beauty standards in social media and popular culture is the result of a

complex interaction among visual representations, digital algorithms, and users' social practices. Women, as active users of media, are among those most affected by this process. They not only consume these standards but also reproduce them through their digital activities. This cycle occurs repeatedly and strengthens the dominance of particular standards within society. This finding is consistent with Hinayah (2025) who argues that digital identity is constructed through visual performativity on social media. The resulting beauty standards subsequently influence the way women perceive themselves and others. This phenomenon demonstrates that beauty is not merely related to aesthetics but is also closely associated with power, identity, and social control that continue to evolve in the digital era.

3.2. Social Pressure and the Internalization of Beauty Standards among Women

Social pressure related to beauty standards has become an increasingly evident phenomenon in women's lives in the digital era. Repeated exposure to representations of ideal bodies and appearances considered attractive creates social expectations that women are expected to fulfill. These expectations are not always communicated directly but emerge through everyday interactions, both within social environments and digital media. Women often feel the need to adjust themselves in order to gain acceptance and recognition within their social circles. Such pressure is implicit in nature yet exerts a powerful influence on how individuals perceive themselves. Within feminist scholarship, this condition is understood as a form of internalization of social norms that position women's bodies as objects of evaluation (Yanti et al., 2026). Prastiwi (2026) further demonstrates that intensive social media use is associated with increased body dissatisfaction among young women.

Interview findings indicate that social pressure originates not only from external environments but also through ongoing processes of social comparison. Salsabila Hadiyanti revealed that she often feels compelled to adjust her appearance in order not to appear different from those around her. She stated,

"Sometimes I feel that I have to look neater or more attractive, not because I want to, but because I am afraid of being judged negatively. Especially when I see my friends on social media, they always seem to present their best selves, so I feel uncomfortable if I appear ordinary." (Interview, Salsabila Hadiyanti, informant, 2026).

This statement demonstrates that social pressure may emerge in the form of discomfort with oneself. Such a condition illustrates that beauty standards function not only as external references but also begin to influence internal self-evaluation. This process occurs subtly yet consistently. The pressure is often not recognized as a form of social control. As a consequence, individuals begin to adjust themselves in order to meet existing expectations. Lita Octaviani also revealed that comments and responses on social media reinforce the social pressure she experiences. She explained:

"I once saw comments about someone's appearance on social media, and they were quite hurtful. After seeing that, I started thinking that if I looked like that, I might be judged the same way. As a result, I unconsciously became more careful about my appearance" (Interview, Lita Octaviani, informant, 2026).

This statement indicates that digital spaces are not merely places for sharing content but also arenas of social evaluation. Comments from other users can shape perceptions regarding what is considered acceptable or unacceptable. This phenomenon strengthens collective forms of social pressure. Research by Hamzah (2026) confirms that social media expand spaces for social comparison, which can increase appearance-related anxiety. This condition demonstrates that social pressure possesses complex and multilayered dimensions. Its influence does not originate from a single source but from various interconnected interactions. The process of internalization becomes evident when beauty standards that initially originate from external sources begin to be accepted as part of self-evaluation. Rizka Maisarah revealed that she often feels inadequate if she does not follow prevailing trends. She stated,

"Sometimes I know those standards are unrealistic, but I still feel inadequate if I do not come close to them. Without realizing it, I start adjusting myself, from the way I dress to how I take care of myself, so that I appear more aligned with what I frequently see on social media" (Interview, Rizka Maisarah, informant, 2026).

This statement demonstrates that internalization occurs through a gradual and repetitive process. Individuals begin to adopt such standards as part of their personal value systems. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Ayu (2026) which found that exposure to idealized images can influence the way individuals evaluate their own bodies. The process illustrates how external standards are transformed into internal beliefs. Consequently, individuals begin to assess themselves according to those standards. Sri Nurhayati further added that social pressure often emerges from within oneself after continuous exposure to media. She stated,

"At first, I was just looking at the content, but over time it felt as though there was a standard that had to be achieved. No one directly forces me, but from within myself there is a feeling that I need to be better and more aligned with what I constantly see" (Interview, Sri Nurhayati, informant, 2026).

This statement demonstrates that social pressure does not always originate externally but is also formed through internalization processes. This phenomenon aligns with Objectification Theory proposed by Fredrickson and Roberts, as cited in Izdihar (2026), which explains that women tend to view themselves as objects subject to evaluation. As a result, tendencies toward self-objectification emerge, negatively affecting psychological well-being. Individuals become increasingly focused on appearance rather than other dimensions of their lives. This condition reflects a shift in the way women

interpret themselves. Social pressure subsequently becomes an integral part of everyday experience.

Furthermore, social pressure also influences women's behavior in presenting themselves within both public and digital spaces. Informants revealed that they frequently adjust their appearance to meet prevailing expectations. Such changes are not always driven by personal desires but rather by the need to gain acceptance. This finding indicates the existence of a negotiation process between individual identity and social demands. Research conducted by Andini (2026) demonstrates that intensive social media use can increase individuals' tendencies to conform to dominant visual norms. This phenomenon illustrates that social pressure can produce tangible behavioral effects. The adaptations undertaken are often perceived as normal and natural. In reality, however, they represent responses to socially constructed standards.

Social pressure and the internalization of beauty standards are interconnected phenomena that occur continuously and reinforce one another. Women face pressure not only from external environments but also from within themselves. Beauty standards that initially exist as social constructs gradually become embedded within individual identities. This condition demonstrates that beauty is not merely related to appearance but also to how individuals interpret and value themselves. Research by Fajri (2026) indicates that women in Indonesia tend to internalize beauty standards as benchmarks of self-worth. This finding is consistent with the results of the present study, which show that social pressure has a significant impact on self-confidence. The phenomenon demonstrates that beauty standards have far-reaching implications for women's lives.

3.3. Identity Negotiation and Women's Strategies in Responding to Beauty Standards

Women are not merely recipients of pressure stemming from beauty standards; they also play an active role in responding to and negotiating these standards in their everyday lives. This process of negotiation emerges as a form of interaction between personal values and the social demands that develop within their surrounding environments. Women's identities are not formed in a static manner but continuously evolve through social experiences and media exposure. In this context, women are confronted with choices to follow, adapt to, or even reject dominant beauty standards. This process demonstrates the existence of individual agency in responding to social pressure. Social identity theory explains that individuals tend to construct their identities through interactions with groups and prevailing norms (Indriyani & Afrizal, 2026). Simanjuntak (2026) further emphasizes that self-identity is a reflexive project that is continuously constructed through life choices and experiences. Interview findings indicate that informants employ different approaches in responding to prevailing beauty standards. Salsabila Hadiyanti revealed that she attempts to balance following trends with maintaining

personal comfort. She stated,

"I do not always follow every trend that appears on social media. Sometimes I only choose the ones that genuinely suit me because forcing myself to follow everything makes me uncomfortable. Now I try to accept myself more, even though I still have the desire to look better" (Interview, Salsabila Hadiyanti, informant, 2026).

This statement demonstrates the existence of a selective process in responding to beauty standards. Individuals neither completely accept nor entirely reject such standards but instead make adjustments based on personal preferences. This reflects a dynamic form of identity negotiation. Women begin to recognize the boundaries between social pressure and personal needs. This process becomes an important component in the formation of a more authentic identity. Lita Octaviani expressed a similar strategy by emphasizing the importance of self-awareness in dealing with social pressure. She explained,

"In the past, I often felt that I had to follow existing standards, but now I have started to realize that not everything needs to be followed. I still pay attention to my appearance, but more in ways that make me comfortable rather than simply following trends that happen to be popular" (Interview, Lita Octaviani, informant, 2026).

This statement indicates a shift in the way beauty is perceived. The process reflects a growing critical awareness of existing social constructions. Research conducted by Anggita (2026) demonstrates that modern women frequently occupy an ambivalent position between conforming to and rejecting beauty standards. This condition illustrates that identity negotiation is not always linear. Individuals may simultaneously exist between two positions. Such a situation highlights the complexity of women's experiences. Rizka Maisarah revealed that she is still in the process of adjusting to prevailing beauty standards. She stated,

"I still often feel the desire to follow trends so that I can look more attractive, but at the same time I realize that they do not always fit who I am. So now I am gradually trying not to depend too much on other people's judgments" (Interview, Rizka Maisarah, informant, 2026).

This statement demonstrates that identity negotiation is a gradual process. Individuals do not immediately achieve a state of self-acceptance but instead move through an ongoing process of reflection. Research by Sari (2026) and Simamora (2025) indicates that body acceptance is the result of a lengthy process involving social experiences and self-awareness. This finding suggests that the strategies adopted by women are not necessarily final. Rather, these processes continue to develop over time. Such conditions illustrate the dynamic nature of identity formation. Sri Nurhayati also highlighted the importance of filtering media influences in shaping self-identity. She stated:

"Now I try not to be overly influenced by what I see on social media. I still pay attention to trends, but I do not use them as my main benchmark. I focus more on what makes me feel comfortable and confident" (Interview, Sri Nurhayati, informant, 2026).

This statement reflects a form of resistance to the dominance of beauty standards. Individuals begin to establish boundaries between external influences and internal values. This finding is consistent with research by Pribadi (2026) which argues that women possess the capacity to resist hegemonic popular culture. Such resistance is not always radical in nature but can emerge through everyday choices. This process demonstrates that women are not entirely passive in the face of social pressure. Instead, they possess the ability to determine the direction of their own identities.

Furthermore, the strategies employed by women in responding to beauty standards are closely related to efforts to build self-confidence. Informants indicated that self-acceptance serves as one of the primary ways to reduce social pressure. This process involves a shift in perspective regarding beauty, no longer viewing it solely through the lens of external standards. Research by Hardita (2026) and Anindhita (2025) demonstrates that a positive body image is associated with an individual's ability to appreciate their body without the need to conform to idealized standards. This finding illustrates that identity negotiation also contributes to psychological well-being. Women who are capable of accepting themselves tend to exhibit greater emotional stability. This condition demonstrates that the strategies employed have significant impacts. The process becomes an essential component in the development of a healthy identity.

Identity negotiation and women's strategies in responding to beauty standards reveal a dynamic relationship between social pressure and individual agency. Women are not merely objects of social construction but also active participants in determining how they respond to prevailing standards. This process involves selection, adaptation, and even resistance to dominant values. The findings indicate that women's identities are flexible and continuously evolving. Research by Adzani (2026) and Farelansyah (2026) confirms that modern individuals possess reflexive capacities in constructing their identities. This demonstrates that women have the space to define beauty according to their own perspectives. This phenomenon is crucial for understanding how women navigate social pressures in the digital era

4. CONCLUSION

Beauty standards among women are formed through powerful processes of social construction, particularly through social media and popular culture. Visual representations repeatedly displayed on digital platforms shape collective perceptions of what constitutes ideal beauty. Women, as active media users, are among the groups most affected by such exposure. The findings of this study demonstrate that beauty standards are not merely understood as aesthetic preferences but also as social norms that

carry implicit forms of pressure. Such social pressure emerges through digital interactions, social comparisons, and public responses to physical appearance. This process encourages women to internalize beauty standards as part of their self-evaluation. Consequently, beauty becomes an important parameter in shaping women's identities and self-esteem in the modern era.

The findings also reveal that women are not entirely passive in confronting such pressures but instead engage in various forms of identity negotiation. The informants demonstrated selective efforts in following trends while maintaining personal comfort and individual values. These strategies reflect the existence of individual agency in responding to prevailing beauty standards. The negotiation process occurs dynamically and is influenced by each individual's experiences and reflective awareness. Several informants have begun to move toward self-acceptance as a form of resistance to narrow and restrictive standards. These findings confirm that women's identities are flexible and continuously evolving through the social interactions they experience. This study contributes to a broader understanding that beauty is not merely a physical matter but is also closely related to social power, cultural construction, and identity formation processes in the digital era.

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