

RESEARCH ARTICLES

**BODY IMAGE IN FEMALE MEDICAL STUDENTS,  
SYARIF HIDAYATULLAH STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY:  
A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY**

Tasya Qonitah Salsabila<sup>1</sup>, Marita Fadhilah<sup>2\*</sup>, Isa Multazam Noor<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Student of bachelor degree of medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Community and Family Medicine Department, Faculty of Medicine, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Psychiatry Department, Dr Soeharto Heerdjan Mental Hospital, Jakarta, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: [maritafadhilah@uinjkt.ac.id](mailto:maritafadhilah@uinjkt.ac.id)

**ABSTRACT**

**Introduction:** Body image issues can be a problem for undergraduate female college students. It happened because female pay more attention to their physical appearance than male. In addition, the ages of undergraduate female college students are generally in the young adult age range, where young adult female are found to often experience problems related to body image. Furthermore, some characteristics of campus life may cause female students to be more susceptible to body image concerns. This study aimed to describe the body image in preclinical female students of the Faculty of Medicine, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta.

**Methodology:** This study was an observational analytic study with a cross-sectional approach that applied to preclinical female students of the Faculty of Medicine, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, which was selected using the cluster random sampling method. Data were collected by looking at respondents' answers to

The Body Appreciation Scale-2 (BAS-2) questionnaire to assess the body.

**Results:** In this study, 120 respondents were collected from the class of 2018, 2019, and 2020 with the age range of 18-22 years. Based on the results of this study, it was known that the majority of research respondents had a negative body image (58.33%). Respondents revealed that questionnaire item which had the most positive results was 'I love my body' (40.8%), meanwhile questionnaire item which had the most negative results was the point 'I feel happy with my body' (75.0%).

**Conclusion:** The majority of female medical students had a negative body image especially for 'I feel happy with my body' item. Further study we would like to identify what risk factors could affect body image perception among female medical students. Therefore, medical institution could address early prevention to decrease body dissatisfaction among their students.

**Keywords:** Female medical students, body image, Indonesia

**INTRODUCTION**

Body image is a systematic, cognitive, affective, conscious, and unconscious representation that people have of their bodies during their biological development and throughout their social relationships.<sup>1</sup> The problem of body image can be a polemic for female students. Female college students are generally in the age range of 18-24 years which are included in the young adult age range.<sup>2</sup> Young adult female often have problems with their body image. Based on research conducted on body image among young adult female, it is evident that when female look in the mirror at least 80 percent of them are not happy with what they see.<sup>3</sup> This can happen because female who enter early adulthood generally pay more attention to their physical appearance so

that they are more supportive in their daily activities.<sup>4</sup>

Female also pay more attention to their physical appearance than male, and society emphasizes the importance of physical appearance to female than male. Physical appearance is very influential and supportive in the daily social life of an individual.<sup>4</sup> An attractive physical appearance can give satisfaction to the individual. The satisfaction of a person's body image is closely related to how the individual views his body.<sup>5</sup> One study found that young adult female gravitated toward generating negative consequences and upward social comparisons related to dissatisfaction and internalizing the stigma that the ideal body is lean. Although the women in the study stated against and challenged the ideal body ideal in the media, it was not sufficient and had no significant effect on body

dissatisfaction and related variables.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, some characteristics of campus life may cause female students to be more susceptible to body image concerns. The intense stress associated with academic and social relationships in campus life can place vulnerable individuals further at risk for psychological problems, one of which is body image dissatisfaction.<sup>7</sup>

The medical faculty has a different learning system from other faculties. An example is the learning system at the Faculty of Medicine, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, which includes lectures, practicums, group discussions with a problem-based learning approach, special topic discussions, expert meetings, and independent study.<sup>8</sup> The fairly dense learning system provides a high enough academic pressure so that it is feared that female students are at risk of psychological problems, such as body image dissatisfaction. In certain way that academic environment influences university setting which induced stress among students. Study in Spanish university students identified correlation between anxiety and body dissatisfaction, it indicated that the higher level of anxiety, the higher level of body dissatisfaction.<sup>9</sup>

Not only that, but attraction to physical appearance can also occur due to ideal body figures or beauty standards on the internet, television, and other communication media which later become a reference for most women. This can trigger a comparison between the appearance of oneself and others. If the appearance of oneself is deemed not to follow beauty standards, there will be body image dissatisfaction. The comparison of appearances can have implications on the psychological and physical well-being of individuals because it will lead to body image dissatisfaction.<sup>10</sup>

Previous research on medical students in Saudi Arabia showed that 73.6% of female students experienced body image dissatisfaction while 55% of female students thought they were too fat.<sup>11</sup> Similar studies in university students in Spain also stated that 61.4% respondents had high and moderate body dissatisfaction.<sup>9</sup> This study aims to determine the body image of female students in the academic stage of the Faculty of Medicine, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta.

## METHODS

This research was an observational analytic study with a cross-sectional approach. The data used are primary data to determine students' body image at the academic stage of the Faculty of Medicine, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta. Data collection was carried out online in October 2021 on 120 female students from 2018, 2019, and 2020 batches with simple random sampling. The inclusion criteria used in this study were students at the academic stage of the Faculty of Medicine, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic

University, willing to participate in the study and had no history of mental disorders. The exclusion criteria used in this study were female students with incomplete data. Data were collected through the Indonesian version of the BAS-2 questionnaire translated by Primarini, A. B (2019). This questionnaire has 10 items, all of which are favorable. A favorable statement is a statement that, if approved, will support the measured attribute. The BAS-2 questionnaire uses a Likert scale where the subject is asked to choose the statement that best fits the subject himself. For each indicator of body image questions, the frequency was given a score range of 1-5 (never, seldom, sometimes, often, and always).<sup>12</sup>

The body image of the respondents was categorized into positive body image and negative body image groups. Respondents were categorized as having a negative body image if they have an accumulated score below the hypothetical score of the instrument (<42) and conversely, they are categorized as having a positive body image if they have an accumulated score of more than or equal to the hypothetical score (≥42). For each indicator of body image questions, the frequency is given a score range of 1-5 (never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always). Body image indicators were considered negative if the score is less than the hypothetical score (<4.58) which is equivalent to the frequency of 'never' to 'often', and vice versa is considered positive if the score exceeds the hypothetical score (≥4.58) or is equivalent to the frequency of 'always'. The hypothetical score was obtained from the following formula:

$$X = M + SD$$

Description:

X	= Hypothetical Score
M	= Mean from the smallest value to the largest value that can be obtained from the instrument
SD of the instrument	= Standard deviation from the smallest value to the largest value that can be obtained from the instrument <sup>13</sup>

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) program was used for statistical analysis. The type of statistical analysis carried out was descriptive statistics where quantitative data were shown as mean, SD, frequency and percentage.

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research has passed the ethical review at The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta No: B-033 /F12/KEPK/TL.00/2021.

## RESULTS

Of all participants 30.8% were at the age of 20 years 27.5% were at the age of 21, 25% were at the age of 19, 11.7% were at the age of 18, and 5% were at the age of 22. 38.3% of the

sample were third-year students (2018 class), 34.2% were first-year students (2020 class), and 27.5% were second-year students (2019 class). The results showed that of 120 participants 58.3% had a negative body image and 41.7% had a positive body image (Table 1).

**Table 1. Characteristics of participants: age, year of class, body image**

Characteristics of participants	Range	Total	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Age	18	14	11.7	19.89	1.09
	19	30	25.0		
	20	37	30.8		
	21	33	27.5		
	22	6	5.0		
Year of Class	2018	46	38.3	40.99	5.94
	2019	33	27.5		
	2020	41	34.2		
Body Image	Negative (<42)	70	58.3	40.99	5.94
	Positive (≥42)	50	41.7		

In detail, the results of the study show that the body image indicator that has the most positive results is 'I love my body' (40.8%). Meanwhile, the body image indicator that has the most negative results is the point 'I feel happy with my body' (75.0%). In addition, the body image indicator with the highest average score is 'I love my body' with an average

score of 4.24 (<4.58) which reflects a negative body image indicator. Meanwhile, the body image indicator with the lowest average score is 'I feel happy with my body' with an average score of 3.79 (<4.58) which also reflects a negative body image indicator (Table 2).

**Table 2. Sample distribution based on body image indicator score**

No.	Body Image Indicator	Frequency (Score)	Total	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
1.	I respect my body	Never (1)	0	0	4.17	0.79
		Seldom (2)	1	0.8		
		Sometimes (3)	26	21.7		
		Often (4)	45	37.5		
		Always (5)	48	40.0		
2.	I feel good about my body	Never (1)	0	0	3.79	0.91
		Seldom (2)	9	7.5		
		Sometimes (3)	37	30.8		
		Often (4)	44	36.7		
		Always (5)	30	25.0		
3.	I feel that my body has at least some good qualities	Never (1)	0	0	4.13	0.77
		Seldom (2)	4	3.3		
		Sometimes (3)	16	13.3		
		Often (4)	60	50.0		
		Always (5)	40	33.3		

4.	I take a positive attitude towards my body	Never (1)	0	0	4.07	0.75
		Seldom (2)	2	1.7		
		Sometimes (3)	24	20.0		
		Often (4)	58	48.3		
		Always (5)	36	30.0		
5.	I am attentive to my body's needs	Never (1)	0	0	4.13	0.77
		Seldom (2)	2	1.7		
		Sometimes (3)	22	18.3		
		Often (4)	54	45.0		
		Always (5)	42	35.0		
6.	I feel love for my body	Never (1)	0	0	4.24	0.76
		Seldom (2)	3	2.5		
		Sometimes (3)	14	11.7		
		Often (4)	54	45.0		
		Always (5)	49	40.8		
7.	I appreciate the different and unique characteristics of my body	Never (1)	0	0	4.22	0.72
		Seldom (2)	3	2.5		
		Sometimes (3)	12	10.0		
		Often (4)	61	50.8		
		Always (5)	44	36.7		
8.	My behavior reveals my positive attitude toward my body; for example, I walk holding my head high and smiling	Never (1)	0	0	4.19	0.74
		Seldom (2)	4	3.3		
		Sometimes (3)	11	9.2		
		Often (4)	63	52.5		
		Always (5)	42	35.0		
9.	I am comfortable in my body	Never (1)	2	1.7	4.08	0.86
		Seldom (2)	3	2.5		
		Sometimes (3)	19	15.8		
		Often (4)	56	46.7		
		Always (5)	40	33.3		
10.	I feel like I am beautiful even if I am different from media images of attractive people (e.g., models, actresses/actors)	Never (1)	0	0	3.98	0.82
		Seldom (2)	4	3.3		
		Sometimes (3)	30	25.0		
		Often (4)	51	42.5		
		Always (5)	35	29.2		

## DISCUSSION

From the result, it was known that the majority of the participants had a negative body image. This was similar to the previous research on medical students in Saudi Arabia showed that 73.6% of female students experienced body image dissatisfaction. In a study which involved university students in Spain, 61.4% respondents had high and moderate body dissatisfaction.<sup>9</sup> Indonesia has similar pattern, study in Padang State University revealed that negative body image dominantly among female students (87.6%).<sup>14</sup> Some studies

involved female medical students of Diponegoro University in Semarang, female students in health versus non health program in Gadjah mada University, and nutrition program students of Bogor Agricultural University had declared that body image perceptions were categorized as negative mostly.<sup>15,16,17</sup>

Being more concerned about their appearance makes body image dissatisfaction is often being a problem in female's societies, especially for young adult female. Medical students are also a risky community for mental health issues as mentioned before that intense stress

associated with academic and social relationships in campus life can place vulnerable individuals further at risk for psychological problems, one of which is body image dissatisfaction.<sup>7</sup> Study in Spanish university students identified relation between anxiety and body dissatisfaction, it indicated that the higher level of anxiety, the higher level of body dissatisfaction.<sup>9</sup> Those characteristics lead to the expectation that there would be a higher number of negative than positive results on body image.

Meanwhile, the body image indicator with the lowest average score was 'I feel happy with my body' with an average score of 3.79 (<4.58) which reflects a negative body image indicator. This was similar to the results of a previous study conducted among young adult female, who found that when they looked in the mirror at least 80% of them were not happy with what they saw.<sup>3</sup> The lowest average score of 'I feel happy with my body' also represents low self-acceptance among female medical students. This finding supported the study in female student of Padang State University, the more negative body image, the lower the level of self-acceptance.<sup>14</sup>

This study presents evidence of body image among female medical students in Indonesia that still had limited exploration. Despite some studies mentioned that there were no correlation between health and non health program to body image perception, still this evidence is valuable for the prevention program in medical institution.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile this study has some limitations such as we have not addressed body mass index (BMI) of female medical students yet which also impacted to body dissatisfaction. This study involved single medical institution only and have not identified yet risk factors that influence body image. It would be more impactful if this study address in multi medical institutions and could explore risk factors that influence body image among female medical students.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be seen that the majority of research participants had a negative body image with the body image indicator with the lowest average score is 'I feel good about my body'. Further study we would like to involve more medical institutions and to identify what risk factors could affect body image perception among female medical students. Therefore, medical institution could address early prevention to decrease body dissatisfaction among their students since it reflects student's self-acceptance.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Authors thank to all the preclinical students of Syarif

Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta who are willing to be respondents in this research.

## FUNDING SOURCES

The fund used by authors is self funding.

## REFERENCES

1. Roy M, Payette H. The body image construct among Western seniors: a systematic review of the literature. *Arch Gerontol Geriatr* 2012;55(3):505–21
2. Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia. Situasi Kesehatan Reproduksi Remaja. InfoDATIN 2015, available from <https://pusdatin.kemkes.go.id/resources/download/pusdatin/infodatin/infodatin-reproduksi-remaja.pdf>
3. Fox K. Mirror, mirror: A summary of research findings on body image. Social Issues Research Centre 1997, available from <http://www.sirc.org/publik/mirror.html>
4. Santoso M.V, Fauzia R, Rusli R. Hubungan Antara Kepuasan Citra Tubuh Dengan Kecenderungan Body Dysmorphic Disorder Pada Wanita Dewasa Awal Di Kota Banjarbaru. *J Kognisia* 2019;2(1):55-60
5. Linden JH. Body Image: A Handbook of Theory, Research, and Clinical Practice. *Am J Clin Hypn* 2004;46(4):353–5. Available from: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00029157.2004.10403620>
6. Pakki S.S, Sathiyaseelan A. Issues Related to Body Image in Young Adult Women. *Saudi J Humanit Soc Sci* 2018;250-254
7. Striegel-Moore R.H, Silberstein L.R, Frensch P, Rodin J. A prospective study of disordered eating among college students. *Int J Eat Disord* 1989;8(5):499–509
8. Hendarto H, et al. Struktur Kurikulum 2019 PSKed dan PSPPD Fakultas Kedokteran Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta. Jakarta; 2020.
9. Medina-Gómez M.B, Martínez-Martín M.A, Escobar-Llamazares M.C, González-Alonso Y & Mercado-Val E. Anxiety and body dissatisfaction in university students. *Acta Colombiana de Psicología* 2019;22(1):22-30. DOI: <http://www.dx.doi.org/10.14718/ACP.2019.22.1.2>
10. Fox J, Vendemia M.A. Selective Self-Presentation and Social Comparison Through Photographs on Social Networking Sites. *Cyberpsychol Behav Soc Netw* 2016;19(10):593–600
11. As-Sa'Edi E, Sheerah S, Al-Ayoubi R, Al-Jehani A, Tajaddin W, Habeeb H. Body image dissatisfaction: Prevalence and relation to body mass index among female medical students in Taibah University, 2011. *J*

- Taibah Univ Med Sci 2013;8(2):126–33. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jtumed.2013.05.001>
12. Primarini A.B. Perbedaan Tingkat Body image pada Remaja Akhir Bertato di Yogyakarta Ditinjau dari Jenis Kelamin [thesis]. Yogyakarta: Univ Sanata Dharma; 2019
  13. Azwar S. Kelompok Subjek Ini Memiliki Harga Diri Yang Rendah"; Kok, Tahu...? Bul Psikol. 2016;1(2):13–7
  14. Maryam S, Ifdil (2019). Relationship between body image and self-acceptance of female students. Jurnal Aplikasi IPTEK Indonesia 2019;3(3):129-136. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24036/4.13148>
  15. Natarijadi D.N, Hadiati T. The Relationship Between Body Image With Eating Disorder in Medical Student. Diponegoro Medical Journal 2021;10(3):204-209
  16. Tsani A.F.A, Astirani A.E, Amalia R, Indraswari L, Lupitasari O, Ayuningtyas C.E. Perception of nutrition claims, food behaviors, and body images among health and non-health students. Jurnal Gizi Klinik Indonesia 2018;15(1):10-15
  17. Kurniawan M.Y, Briawan D, Caraka R.E. Body image perception and eating disorders in adolescents. Jurnal Gizi Klinik Indonesia 2015;03(11):105-114