



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BODY IMAGE AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH IN MANADO, INDONESIA: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY
Hubungan Body Image Dengan Kesehatan Mental Remaja Di Manado, Indonesia: Studi Cross-Sectional

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ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescence is a crucial period of transition marked by physical, emotional, and social changes that make individuals more vulnerable to developing a negative body image. Dissatisfaction with body image can cause problems, such as mental health. **Purpose:** This study aimed to analyze the relationship between body image and the mental health of adolescents at SMAN (Senior High School) 1 Manado. **Methods:** This study was a cross-sectional study involving 315 students selected using the Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling technique on students of SMAN 1 Manado. The measuring instruments used were the Body Shape Questionnaire-34 (BSQ-34) with a validity value of 0.826–0.902 and a reliability of 0.990 and the General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12) with a reliability value of 0.841 and proven valid with a LR+ value of 2.12 and LR– of 0.31. The analysis used in this study was the Spearman test. **Results:** The results showed a positive relationship between body image and mental health among adolescents ($p = 0.000$; $r = 0.241$). **Conclusion:** Body image is positively associated with adolescents' mental health, indicating that adolescents with a more positive body image tend to have better mental health conditions; Therefore, interventions promoting self-acceptance and a healthy body image are essential for mental health promotion and prevention.

Keywords: body image, mental health, adolescents

ABSTRAK

Latar belakang: Masa remaja adalah masa transisi dan eksplorasi. Pada tahap ini, perubahan fisik, emosional, dan sosial yang signifikan membuat remaja lebih rentan mengalami body image negatif. Ketidakpuasan terhadap body image tersebut dapat menimbulkan masalah, seperti kesehatan mental. **Tujuan:** untuk menganalisis hubungan antara body image dengan kesehatan mental remaja di SMAN 1 Manado. **Metode:** Penelitian ini merupakan Cross Sectional Study pada siswa SMAN 1 Manado. Teknik sampling yang digunakan adalah Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling dengan besar sampel sebanyak 315 siswa. Alat ukur yang digunakan adalah Body Shape Questionnaire-34 (BSQ-34) dengan nilai validitas 0,826–0,902 serta reliabilitas sebesar 0,990 dan General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12) dengan nilai reliabilitas 0,841 serta terbukti valid dengan nilai LR+ sebesar 2,12 dan LR– sebesar 0,31. Analisis yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah uji spearman. **Hasil:** Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif antara body image dengan kesehatan mental pada remaja ($p = 0,000$), dengan nilai $r = 0,241$. **Kesimpulan:** Body image memiliki hubungan terhadap kesehatan mental remaja dengan arah hubungan positif, di mana remaja yang memiliki body image lebih positif cenderung menunjukkan kondisi kesehatan mental yang lebih baik, sehingga perlu adanya intervensi mengenai penerimaan diri dan citra tubuh yang sehat sebagai bagian dari upaya promotif dan preventif dalam menjaga kesehatan mental remaja.

Kata Kunci: body image, kesehatan mental, remaja

INTRODUCTION

According to Erikson (1950), adolescence represents a transitional and exploratory phase in which identity formation occurs through self-reflection and social interaction. Rapid physical changes during this period often heighten adolescents' sensitivity to external perceptions, increasing their vulnerability to social comparison, self-evaluation, and mental health challenges (Mokalu & Boangmanalu, 2021; World Health Organization, 2024). Research shows that adolescents aged 15–18 are more likely to experience body dissatisfaction and mental health disorders (Prastuti & Mulyani, 2020).

Globally, 1 in 7 adolescents (14%) aged 10–19 experience a mental health disorder (World Health Organization, 2024). The Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (2022) revealed that mental health issues are common among adolescents, with 1 in 3 adolescents aged 10–17 (34.9%) experiencing a mental health problem in the past 12 months. Badan Kebijakan Pembangunan Kesehatan (2023) noted that of Indonesia's 37 provinces, North Sulawesi ranked 12th for mental health problems, with a prevalence of approximately 6,178 cases in those aged 15 and above.

Mental health disorders in adolescents have significant and wide-ranging consequences, including reduced academic achievement, behavioral and social difficulties, and an elevated risk of substance abuse as a coping mechanism. These disorders also influence cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning, placing substantial burdens on individuals, families, and communities. The risk of suicide attempts may increase, without appropriate intervention (Caesaria *et al.*, 2024; Purnamasari *et al.*, 2022; Yulia *et al.*, 2024). One factor contributing to the risk of adolescents experiencing mental health

disorders is dissatisfaction with body image (Choukas-Bradley *et al.*, 2022). Body image is a person's perception of the ideal body and expectations regarding their weight and shape, which is influenced by the views of others and the extent to which they conform to those views (Denich & Ifdil, 2015)

A March 2019 survey by the Mental Health Foundation and YouGov of 1,118 adolescents aged 13–19 in the UK showed that body image significantly influences adolescents' feelings. In the survey, 40% of adolescents were concerned about images on social media, 37% felt pressured to meet ideal beauty standards, and 31% felt ashamed because their bodies did not match their actual bodies (Mental Health Foundation, 2019). In Jatinangor, 72.7% of adolescents aged 15–18 experienced body image concerns (Mental Health Foundation, 2019). In North Sulawesi, 21% of adolescents aged 15–18 in Kema II Village also reported having a negative body image (Manoppo & Lang, 2022).

A preliminary study conducted at SMAN (Senior High School) 1 Manado utilizing the BSQ-34 questionnaire among 31 students indicated that the majority (51.6%) expressed dissatisfaction with their body shape. Subsequent interviews revealed that adolescents frequently associate ideal body standards with tall stature, a small waist, and aesthetically pleasing, well-maintained curves. Students also reported multiple instances of serious mental health concerns within the school environment. Notably, there was a reported case of attempted suicide and self-harm among students at the school. These incidents underscore the necessity of addressing student mental health issues.

A literature review elaborated that body image influences adolescent mental health, with varying results depending on social and cultural factors. Research in China indicated that individuals who struggle to

accept their body shape are more susceptible to mental health disorders (Wang *et al.*, 2023). This is in line with other research in Tunisia, which revealed that perceptions of body weight are closely related to mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Individuals who perceive themselves as overweight tend to have lower self-esteem and a higher risk of anxiety (Ghannem *et al.*, 2024). However, research conducted in Indonesia in Bengkulu City showed that the influence of body image on adolescent mental health was relatively weak, at only 26.7% (Oktapia *et al.*, 2024). This discrepancy in findings suggests that the relationship between body image and mental health may differ across population contexts, so further research on adolescents in other regions of Indonesia is needed to obtain a more comprehensive picture.

This series of phenomena, data, and preliminary studies confirm that body image is related to adolescent mental health. However, the discrepancies in findings from several previous studies indicate a gap that requires further investigation, particularly among adolescents at SMAN 1 Manado. In Manado City, beauty standards are strongly identified with physical beauty such as fair skin, clean skin, an ideal body, and a neat appearance. Research also shows that adolescents aged 15–18 years are more likely

to experience body dissatisfaction and mental health disorders (Prastuti & Mulyani, 2020). This study aims to analyze the relationship between body image and mental health among adolescents at SMAN 1 Manado, as well as its association with respondent characteristics.

METHOD

Research Design

This quantitative research used a cross-sectional study approach, analyzing the relationship between independent and dependent variables observed simultaneously (Wang & Cheng, 2020).

Research Location and Time

This research was conducted at SMAN (Senior High School) 1 Manado from March 2025 to May 2025.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of all 10th and 11th grade students at SMAN 1 Manado, with a total population of 1,365 students. The sampling technique used was Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling, which is a technique that provides a balanced proportion from each grade level. The sample consisted of 315 students. The number of samples for each grade was determined proportionally according to the following method:

Table 1. Research Sample Distribution

Class	Number of Students	Number of samples
10 th Grade	702	$\frac{702}{1365} \times 310 = 159,39$ (159)
11 th Grade	663	$\frac{663}{1365} \times 310 = 150,61$ (151)
Total	1365	310

Classes were selected as sample units randomly using a spinwheel based on the class numbers in each stratum. A total of 18 tenth-grade classes and 17 eleventh-grade classes were entered into the spinwheel to be randomized, resulting in the selection of five

tenth-grade classes and six eleventh-grade classes as the research sample.

Research Variables

The variables in this study are body image as the independent variable and mental health as the dependent variable.

Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study consisted of demographic data, the Body Shape Questionnaire-34 (BSQ-34), and the General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12). Demographic data included the respondent's initials, age, weight, height, gender, and class. The BSQ-34 is an instrument developed by Cooper et al. (1987) to assess negative body image, particularly related to excessive concerns about body shape. This instrument has been proven to be valid and reliable, with validity values ranging from 0.826 to 0.902 and reliability of 0.990 (Pratiwi, 2023). The total BSQ-34 score ranges from 0 to 204 and has four categories: <80 indicates no concern about body shape, 80–110 indicates mild concern about body shape, 111–140 indicates moderate concern about body shape, and >140 indicates high concern about body shape. Meanwhile, GHQ-12 is a shortened version of the General Health Questionnaire developed by Goldberg & Blackwell (1970) to detect common mental health disorders such as somatic symptoms, anxiety, social dysfunction, and depression. Thus, the higher the score, the greater the indication of mental health disorders, while a lower score indicates better mental health. The GHQ-12 has a reliability of 0.841 based on the Cronbach's Alpha test and has been proven valid through Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) and Likelihood Ratio (LR) analyses, with an LR+ value of 2.12 and an LR– value of 0.31 (Primasari & Hidayat, 2016). GHQ-12 scoring can be done using various methods, one of which is the Likert method, where response 1 is valued at 0, response 2 is valued at 1, response 3 is valued at 2, and response 4 is valued at 3. The interpretation of this questionnaire states that if the score obtained is equal to or exceeds the specified cut-off point, then the individual is indicated to have certain psychological

disorders. The total GHQ-12 score ranges from 0–12, indicating a low result, 13–24, indicating a moderate result, and 25–36, indicating a high result. For BMI calculation data using height in meters, the author first converted the height data from centimeters to meters and then transformed the variable into Underweight (<18.5), Ideal Weight (18.5–22.9), Obesity Risk (23–24.9), and Obesity (>25).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study used SPSS version 22. Univariate analysis was performed to examine the frequency distribution table of respondent characteristics, such as age, gender, class, BMI, body image description, and mental health description. In this study, the researcher performed a normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov for body image data with mental health. Based on the results of the normality test on body image and mental health data, a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) was obtained, so it can be concluded that the distribution of body image and mental health data is not normally distributed. Based on the results of the normality test, the test used to assess the relationship between body image and mental health was the Spearman test. In addition, additional analysis was conducted to see if there was a relationship between respondent characteristics and mental health. The Spearman test was used for the age variable, the Mann-Whitney test for class and gender, and the Kruskal-Wallis test for the BMI variable.

Ethics Clearance

This study has obtained ethical approval from the Health Research Ethics Committee of Sint Carolus College of Health Sciences (STIK SC) with number: 060/KEPPKSTIKSC/V/2025.

RESULT

Table 2. Characteristics of Respondents (n=315)

Characteristics	Mental Health						Total		Mean ± SD
	Low		Medium		High		n	(%)	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)			
Mental Health									
Low							173	54,9	
Medium							134	42,5	
High							8	2,5	
Age								15,69 ± 0,734	
Grade									
10th Grade	85	53,1	72	45	3	1,9	160	50,8	
11th Grade	88	56,8	62	40	5	3,2	155	49,2	
Gender									
Female	84	48,6	81	46,8	8	4,6	173	54,9	
Male	89	62,7	53	37,3	0	0	142	45,1	
Body Mass Index									
Underweight	51	29,5	47	35,1	1	12,5	99	31,4	
Ideal Body Weight	84	48,6	62	46,3	4	50	150	47,6	
Risk of Obesity	13	7,5	15	11,2	1	12,5	29	9,2	
Obesity	25	14,5	10	7,5	2	25	37	11,7	
Body image									
No dissatisfaction	111	64,2	77	57,5	0	0	188	59,7	
Mild dissatisfaction	36	20,8	29	21,6	2	25	67	21,3	
Moderate dissatisfaction	20	11,6	15	11,2	2	25	37	11,7	
High dissatisfaction	6	3,5	13	9,7	4	50	23	7,3	

Based on Table 2, it was found that the majority of respondents were female (54.9%) with an average age of 15.69 years, and most were in grade X (50.8%). Based on Body Mass Index (BMI) categories, most adolescents were in the ideal weight category

(47.6%). Meanwhile, based on body image, most adolescents were not dissatisfied with their bodies (59.7%). Then, in terms of mental health, the majority of respondents (54.9%) showed no indications of mental health disorders.

Table 3. The relationship between body image and respondent characteristics with mental health (n=315)

	Median (minimum-maximum)	R-Value	P-Value
Body Image^a		0,241	0,000*
Age^a		-0,031	0,578
Grade^b			0,912
10th grade	12 (2-32)		
11th grade	11 (0-31)		
Gender^b			0,000*
Female	13 (2-32)		
Male	10 (0-24)		
IMT^c			0,872
Underweight	12 (2-28)		
Ideal Weight	12 (0-32)		
Risk of Obesity	13 (2-28)		
Obesity	11 (3-32)		

a: analyzed using the Spearman test.

b: analyzed using the Mann-Whitney test.

c: analyzed using the Kruskal-Wallis test.

*: significant with a p-value = < 0.05

Based on Table 3, the data shows a relationship between body image and mental health in adolescents ($p = 0.000$), with a value of $r = 0.241$, which means a weak strength with a positive correlation direction. This means that the more positive a person's perception of body image, the better their mental health tends to be. Although the r value indicates a weak correlation, statistically the relationship is significant. The analysis results show that only gender.

DISCUSSION

Based on the research results, the majority of adolescents had a positive body image and were not dissatisfied with their body shape. Furthermore, most respondents did not show any indication of mental health disorders. Further analysis showed a positive relationship between body image and adolescent mental health, with adolescents with a more positive body image tending to have better mental health. Analysis based on respondent characteristics also showed that gender had a significant relationship with mental health, while age, grade, and body mass index did not show a significant relationship.

These findings align with research by Sukoco *et al.*, (2022) and Prameswari *et al.*, (2023). The high number of adolescents with positive body image is attributed to support from a positive social environment, particularly support and acceptance of appearance from friends and family, which plays a crucial role in shaping adolescents' self-esteem and body image (Prameswari *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, adolescents with stronger self-confidence and self-understanding tend to be more accepting of their bodies and develop a positive body image (Hockenberry *et al.*, 2019; Setiawan, 2020). This can also be attributed to local cultural values in North Sulawesi that prioritize tolerance and diversity, thus

contributing to a supportive social environment for adolescents in developing a positive body image. Furthermore, social views regarding beauty standards among the people of North Sulawesi also contribute to the development of a positive body image in adolescents (Mamangkey, 2024).

However, some adolescents still experience dissatisfaction with their body shape (40.3%). When adolescents feel their bodies do not meet accepted standards, they tend to develop a negative body image, even though their appearance objectively falls within ideal limits (Ramanda *et al.*, 2019). A large gap between their perceived physical appearance and their ideal image leads to negative self-evaluations, which in turn lower self-confidence (Denich & Ifdil, 2015). One factor that reinforces this negative perception is social media, which creates ideal body standards and encourages validation through likes and comments. As a result, adolescents are more susceptible to comparing themselves to others, which can lead to increased body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, impaired self-identity, social pressure, and cyberbullying (Merino *et al.*, 2024).

In this study, the majority of adolescents showed no indication of mental health disorders. This finding is in line with the study of Yulia *et al.*, (2024). According to Prihartini *et al.*, (2023), good mental health in adolescents is influenced by the support of friends and family, a good level of self-confidence, the ability to regulate emotions, clear life goals, and a level of religiosity. Good mental health in adolescents in this study can also be influenced by local values of North Sulawesi such as "Sitou Timou Tumou Tou" which instills the importance of caring, solidarity and healthy social relationships (Tuela *et al.*, 2023). However, it cannot be denied that in this study there are still 45.1% of adolescents who have

symptoms of mental health disorders. According to World Health Organization (2024), adolescents are vulnerable to mental health disorders, because they are in a phase of rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial development. Factors such as academic pressure, conflict with peers, family problems, hormonal and emotional changes during puberty, inability to adjust to social expectations, lack of social support, low self-confidence, as well as exposure to social media and gender norms can also worsen the mental condition of adolescents (Rahmawaty *et al.*, 2022).

Based on the analysis, a relationship was found between body image and mental health of adolescents at Manado 1 Senior High School. These results align with research by Oktapia *et al.*, (2024) and Belangi (2024). Adolescents with positive body image generally exhibit better mental health, characterized by high self-confidence, resilience, and healthy social relationships (Merino *et al.*, 2024). A positive view of the body is crucial for building mental health, as individuals tend to reject unrealistic beauty standards and focus more on bodily function than physical appearance (Swami *et al.*, 2024). Positive social interactions also play a crucial role in strengthening mental health by fostering a healthy body image. For example, support and appreciation of a close friend's appearance not only increases a person's positive view of their own body but also fosters a sense of self-acceptance, which in turn leads to a greater appreciation for their own bodily functions (Alleva *et al.*, 2021). This suggests that changes in body perception stem not only from within the individual but can also be influenced by warm relationships and social support. The better a person accepts himself, the more it will affect his self-esteem and self-concept (Tort-Nasarre *et al.*, 2023).

Based on the results of additional analysis related to respondent characteristics and adolescent mental health, there was a significant relationship with gender. This study found that female adolescents experienced more symptoms of mental health disorders. This finding aligns with research by Astuti *et al.*, (2024) which showed that more female respondents experienced symptoms of mental health disorders. Female adolescents more often ruminated on their experiences, blamed themselves, or exaggerated their sadness, while males showed a different response pattern (Astuti *et al.*, 2024; Zahra *et al.*, 2023).

This study has several strengths, including the use of standardized instruments, the BSQ-34 and GHQ-12, which have good validity and reliability, and a focus on a school-age adolescent population, which provides a representative picture of adolescent psychosocial conditions. However, this study also has limitations. Data were obtained through self-report questionnaires, which have the potential to introduce subjective bias. The scope of respondents was limited to 10th and 11th grade students at SMAN 1 Manado, so the results cannot be generalized to the entire adolescent population in North Sulawesi. Furthermore, the weight and height data used to calculate BMI were obtained through self-reports, so their accuracy may vary. Furthermore, the cross-sectional study design is a significant limitation, as it does not allow for the interpretation of causal relationships between the measured factors and adolescent mental health status.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The results of this study showed a significant relationship between body image and mental health in adolescents at Manado 1 Senior High School. The relationship is positive, with adolescents with a more

positive body image tending to report better mental health. Furthermore, gender was significantly associated with mental health, with gender acting as a risk factor for mental health problems.

Based on these findings, schools can provide counseling and education services regarding positive body image, thereby contributing to adolescent mental health. Further research is recommended on a larger scale, as this study was conducted in only one school, which does not represent the entire adolescent population in North Sulawesi. It is important for adolescents to recognize that every individual has a different body shape and that self-worth is not solely determined by physical appearance.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Author Bulan Nada Stevina Onibala collected data, analyzed data, and wrote the manuscript. Author Khairun Nisa was involved in developing research design, data analysis, reviewing, and revising the manuscript. Author Susi Roida Simanjuntak played a role in critical review of the article's content, data analysis, data quality evaluation, and refinement of the writing structure.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

The authors acknowledge the use of ChatGPT for language refinement in the preparation of this manuscript. All AI-generated content has been rigorously reviewed, edited, and validated to ensure accuracy and originality. Full responsibility for the final content of the manuscript rests with the authors.

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