Self Concept and the Ideal Body of Women  
(Phenomenology Study of followers’ Instagram Account @Hughes.Dewi)

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Abstract

Some studies reveal that many Indonesian women are not satisfied with their body shape. To get a perfect shape, everyone has their own way to make it happen. One trend that is happening among Indonesian people is by following tips and information about healthy food, diet, or ideal body that is shared on social media accounts, especially Instagram. Indonesian celebrity named Dewi Hughes have successful in reducing her weight about 75 kg by doing her popular diet method “diet kenyang”. Her diet method basically is only consuming fruits and vegetables as a “real food”. Using Instagram account @Hughes.Dewi, she shares her way of diet, tips, recipes and her diet experiences which gained lots of attentions and followers. This research takes the perspective of symbolic interactionism proposed and developed by George Herbert Mead, Charles Horton Cooley and Herbert Blumer. It is this principle that helps us understand the formation of individual self and the socialization of the individual into the wider society. On this research, there are two women as informant which are followers of Instagram account @Hughes.Dewi. They are inspired by Hughes’ successful diet and also doing diet to reduce their weight. This research will explore about how their self concept related the ideal body of woman based on mind, self and society. The research finds that the self concept regarding ideal body of women still follows the growing stereotypes in the society. When the mass media, social media, the profession, culture and society construct the ideal body shape. Women with bodies which not ideal will tend to feel bad and required to be able to lose weight and achieve the ideal body shape. A slim and skinny body shape is become an
additional value to have a good and ideal appearance. Having a healthy body is the more desired by women.

Keywords: social interaction; self concept; ideal body; healthy diet; self-image

Introduction
Unstable physical and emotional changes often cause dissatisfaction of body image among Indonesian women (Dienny, Kartasurya, & Puruhita, 2014). Various studies in the study of the social sciences show that the body is not only a biological body that is not touched by culture, it is the body of contestation of various ideologies that can not be separated from cultural construction (Mochtar, 2009).

Someone judged from the appearance, namely the ability in giving a beautiful and young image that she has become a high selling / exchange rate in the consumer society. In line with that idea is Bourdieu's concept of “body capital”, namely that certain physical assets can function as exchangeable capital for profit. Therefore, much effort is made to improve the appearance in order to achieve the ideal body image (Mahar, 1990). To get an ideal body everyone has their own way to make it happen (Bestiana, 2013).

Social media as a media that is widely followed and followed by many people become a very significant media and potential to change public opinion in various ways. Online media has a purpose as an imaging tool if the strategy is done very effectively, then the personal character will be easily built (Kertamukti, 2015). The positive value of social media is then used by a multitalented artist Dewi Hughes to share information about her healthy diet to get the ideal body. Dewi Hughes successfully lose weight within 8 months from 150 kg to 75 kg.

In 2010, Hughes started his healthy diet by exercising regularly for 6 hours per day for several months. However, extreme sports conducted by Hughes resulted in her to be hospitalized for dehydration (Princess, 2017). A few years later, Hughes discovered the “diet kenyang” method that she still does. Through diet kenyang, Hughes invites the public not only to be slim but to get the ideal body in a healthy way. Entering 2016, Hughes is committed to consuming only natural food and calling it “real food” where the food is without preparations, packaging, preservatives, and spices. Hughes can consume six tomatoes for breakfast, pounds of fruit juice for lunch, and vegetable stew without any seasoning for dinner. With this healthy diet method, Hughes managed to lose weight as much as 75 kg within one year (Souisa, 2017).

In Indonesia, the ideal body is generally considered a slim body. Being ideal has become a separate culture that develops from time to time both in adolescents and adult women. The ideal body is slim as if it were a symbol of beauty itself. The presence of new media such as Instagram increasingly opened the world of women and add their insights...
about one of the constructions about beauty through “diet kenyang” done by Dewi Hughes.

This research will reveal self concept of each informant about the ideal body of women based on mind, self and society of followers’ Instagram account @Hughes.Dewi. As a result of interaction with the content of posts and comments in Instagram @Hughes.Dewi and views of the community at large scale.

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical Framework**

This research uses the perspective of symbolic interactionism which sees society from an individual perspective, positioning the individual as an autonomous agent that forms its own social environment. The term symbolic interactionism itself was coined by Herbert Blumer to summarize Mead’s thoughts about the interactions that make the individual as a whole person (West Turner, 2007, p. 102). Herbert Blumer confirms three main principles in symbolic interactionism, which are: meaning, language, and thinking (thoughts).

Herbert Blumer gives the basic assumption of symbolic interactionism, concerning the essence of symbolic interactionist thought in the following basic assumptions:

- a. Man acts (act) against something (thing) on the basis of meaning (meaning) that something owned for him;
- b. The meaning of something is obtained through the process of social interaction;
- c. Meaning is changed through the process of interpretation (interpretive processes)
- d. Individuals develop self-concept through interaction with others (looking glass-self);
- e. Self-concept provides an important motive for behaving;
- f. Humans and groups are influenced by cultural and social processes; and
- g. The social structure works through social interaction.

The content of Instagram @Hughes.Dewi and the society’s view are categorized in the mind that influences the thinking process of each informant who plays as self. Meanwhile, community comments on Instagram @Hughes.Dewi included as a society as a form of response and public opinion (generalized other) of the ideal body of women.

**Conceptual Framework**

**Ideal Body of Women**

In this research, the concept of the ideal body is defined as the form and size of the body is considered perfect and most desired by someone. Each individual, consciously or unconsciously, is willing to meet the ideal body standards prevailing in his social and cultural environment (Brown and Konner, 1987; Myers and Biocca, 1992; Wolf, 2002; Kullick and Meneley, 2004). Social, economic, ecological, and cultural factors are very influential on the ideal body concept adopted by society (Bakhshi, 2008) in Bestiana, 2013; Synott, 2003; Brewis, 2011; Wolf, 2002 in Listiyani, 2016). Assessing the ideal body...
is the Body Mass Index (BMI) with the following formula: \( BMI = \frac{\text{Weight (kg)}}{[\text{Height (m)}]^2} \) (National Institutes of Health and National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute in Brewis, 2011).

**Self Concept**

Self-concept is described by DeVito as a description of who we really are. This self-concept is the development of others' portraits of ourselves, expressed to us: comparisons made between ourselves and others; our cultural experience in racial, ethnic, gender, and gender roles; and our evaluation of our thoughts and behavior (DeVito, 2000, p. 74).

**Diet**

Diet is a special eating rule that is intended for health, one of which is weight management. The definition of diet according to (Kim and Lennon, 2006; Ruderman, 1986; Hawks, 2008) as “Reduction in caloric intake to lose weight”. This definition states that the diet is a deliberate activity of limiting the nutrients of calories, which is intended to get a slimmer and ideal body shape.

**Instagram Account about Diet**

Instagram comes from the word “instant-telegram”. Not only as a picture sharing media, many Instagram accounts are specialized to share information about diets spread across the world, not least in Indonesia. Accounts that provide information about how a good diet, what tips to do for the diet, and so forth. Such a thing is much discussed in the account Instagram of Dewi Hughes.

**Research Methodology**

**Research Paradigm**

This research uses constructivist paradigm because it wants to look at subjective experience of the informant. Humans are considered free and active in behaving and interpreting the social reality experienced. Individual realities that are fluid and volatile because of human interaction. In Creswell (2010, p. 11) it is explained that Social Constructivism reinforces the assumption that individuals are always trying to understand the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings for their experiences.

**Approach and Type of Research**

This research is a qualitative research. Researchers plunge directly into the field to conduct research. This study uses a qualitative approach because it is an attempt to present the social world of the informants, and expound their perspective on the concept of their ideal body and self-concept. What they studied is their conceptual,
behavioral, perceptual, and problem aspects. Qualitative research based on the nature of reality, contains the subjective perception that reality (communication) is dual, complex, pseudo, dynamic (changeable), constructed, and holistic, the truth of reality is relative.

The qualitative research strategy used in this research is Phenomenology. Phenomenology is a research strategy in which the researcher identifies the nature of human experience about a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2010, p. 21). According to Edmund Husserl (in Kuswarno, 2009, p. 10) on the study of phenomenology:

"With phenomenology we can learn forms of experience from the point of view of the person who experienced it directly, as if we experienced it ourselves. Phenomenology not only classifies any conscious action taken, but also includes predictions of future action, judging from the aspects associated with it. It all comes from how someone interpreted the object in his experience. Therefore, it is not wrong if phenomenology is also interpreted as the study of meaning, where the meaning is broader than just the language that represents"

**Informant Research**

The process of selecting informants from this study is determined through a technique that is expected to meet the criteria of respondents required that is using Purposive Sampling. Purposive Sampling is: "The selection of purposive or purposive samples, often referred to as judgment sampling, is an election of who the subject is in the best position to provide the required information. Therefore, determining the subject or the chosen persons must be in accordance with the specific characteristics possessed by the sample "(Moleong, 2007, p. 25). Purposive Sampling can be used to identify the type of case in in-depth investigation to gain a deeper understanding (Neuman, 2013, p. 299).

The determination of informants in phenomenological research depends on the capability of the person to be interviewed in order to articulate their life experiences (see Creswell, 1998, p. 111-113). Further more, Creswell (1998, p. 118) the requirements of a good informant are: "... all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon". Informants in this study are 2 (two) adult women who experienced the same phenomenon, which are: followers account @Hughes.Dewi and feel the need to lose weight to achieve ideal body shape.

**Method of Collecting Data**

Data collection techniques used by researchers in this study, is a direct in-depth interview. In-depth interview between the researcher and the informant (subject) who experienced the same phenomenon of followers account instagram @Hughes.Dewi. The
form of interview questions which are semi-structured, using an audiotape and translating interview results.

**Method of Data Analysis**
Data obtained by in-depth interview can be analyzed data analysis process with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as written by Smith (2009, p. 79-107 in Hajaroh). Collecting and studying various research-related journals, field notes, explaining the background of informants. The stages are as follows: a) Reading and re-reading. b) Initial noting. c) Developing Emergent Themes. d) Searching for connections across emergent themes. e) Moving the next cases. f) Looking for patterns across cases.

**Data Validity**
In qualitative research, the data can be valid if there is no difference between what is reported by the researcher and what actually happened to the object being studied but the truth of the data reality according to qualitative research is not singular, but plural and dependent on the researcher's construct, formed in a person the results of mental processes of each individual with various backgrounds. One of the test of data validity in qualitative research is internal validity test which validity test of data used by researcher in this research. The data credibility test is done with extension of observation, increased persistence in research, triangulation, discussion with peers, negative case analysis, and member check.

**Results**

**General Description of Informant**
Informants in this research consisted of 2 Javanese adult women who lived in Jakarta. They are university graduate. Both of them are employees. Their age is about 30 years-old. Body weight is an issue for them. Based on BMI calculation, they body are part of over weight category. Until now, they are keep doing diet and others effort to achieve their dream of ideal body weight.

**Data Analysis**

**Ideal Body of Women**
The researcher found that each informant considers the ideal body that they want to acquire based on the ideal picture that other people and society expect from themselves. Ideal body of women which are slim. Slim body represents healthy and beauty. Having slim body will give confident and better life. Informants confirm that people will love slim woman. Both informants believe that overweight body is identic with unhealthy body and trigger negative comment from society. Women with ideal body will get more attention and better opportunity. Ideal body shape is fit body, skinny thight and leg with flat tummy.
Diet

In this research, found that the informants are keep trying to become slimmer. Both informants inspired and motivated by Hughes’ diet kenyang that made her able to reduce 75 kg in 8 months. Hughes doing her diet with good commitment after live as obese woman during her lifetime. They realise that they do not strong commitment in doing their diet. They are happy and get good comment if able to reduce few kilograms. Doing their diet is not easy for them. One informant is facing bad dream when doing diet may and getting limp. Others informant feels bad because her tummy can not feel full by only eating fruits and vegetables. Besides that, she can stop eating meats. Now, they are still trying to reduce in eating rice and consume more fruits and vegetables to get slimmer body.

Self Concept

Mind

The researcher found that the informant not happy and not confident being overweight because overweight is a burden in their life. That data shows that informants want to be slimmer because on their mind which they are believe that slim and fit is good while over weight is bad and get negative stare from society.

Both informants said that they want to have ideal body like Hughes. They added that Hughes looks prettier with slimmer body shape. Hughes’ success story makes them believe that their effort to be slim is possible. They want to get beautiful by having slimmer body.

Both informant avoiding to post photo on social media. One informant added that she does not feel comfortable even when taking photo with some of her friends because unconfident. Even, one of informant choose to stay at her bedroom to avoid meeting friend and people because of her overweight body.

Overweight body make the informant feel not confident. Over weight is burden for the both informants. They feel bad and losing their motivation when can not maintain their ideal body weight. They feel ugly with their over weight body. The informants felt different from society because the overweight body.

Self

Regarding self which consist of “I” and “me” in dealing with judgement from ourselves, family, close community, and society. In this research found that both informant want to be slimmer because they want to be liked by their surrounding and able to fullfil the society standard of ideal body. Because both informants have experienced that slim woman will receive good comment while overweight woman trigger negative comment.

When Hughes share her happiness because able to play swing again after she got slim body by posting the photo @Hughes.Dewi Instagram account. Many of Hughes’
followers give her comment “beautiful”. Most of Hughes posting of her Instagram that receive comment with word “beautiful”. One of the informant use motto “big is beautiful” to support her confident while facing negative coment from her surrounding.

Others informant realise big body also give problem in doing some activity. That’s why, both informants doing diet to have an ideal body. Even, one of informant got negative comment from her husband and her mom because of her overweight body. Her husband and her mom also think that her over weight body that make her can not pregnant after a few years of marriage.

**Society**

The researcher found that the informants feels bad while got negative comment from their society that made them not confident with their overweight body. From the media, such as Korean TV series that being watched by one of the informant, showing that slim and pretty woman will be main character of the show while fat woman will be the character that being bullied. Somehow, the content of the TV series, make the informant feel not comfortable to be in public places. Although she is still feel comfortable with her close community (such as: family, colleague). Both informants also agreed that people usually consider that slim women is competent and get respected.

**Discussion**

It is to be understood that this study assumes that the process of forming individual self-concepts over the ideal female body occurs through the interaction of individuals and society. Therefore, it is very important to describe the process of forming individual self-concepts about the woman’s ideal body that involves mind, self, and society. The three themes of George Herbert Mead’s concept of thought that underlies symbolic interaction.

In this study described how self is formed by being three parts, namely self-assessment, family or nearest person, and peer group or work environment. These three things have made themselves feel unfit and influenced informed decisions to lose weight. Researchers see this phenomenon as an interesting finding where there are several patterns that begin to look from one's thinking to the context of the formation of self-concept, such as:

1. **The importance of meaning to human behavior**

Symbolic interaction theory can not be separated from the communication process, because at first meaning is meaningless, until finally in the construction interpretive by individuals through the process of interaction to create mutually agreed meaning. Humans act against other human beings based on the meaning that others give them, meaning is created in interaction between humans, meaning is modified through an interpretive process.
The results of this study seen from the level of the individual is the ideal body to be obtained by someone based on the ideal picture that other people and society expect from themselves. There are those who want to get the ideal body shape to meet the needs of the work environment because of the attractive appearance can support the task. There is also a purpose to be able to meet the views and ideal assumptions by the community and people close to her.

When a person has a body that is considered to be not ideal then a close person's comments about an unhealthy body shape carry the psychological effects of discomfort, other than that there is a fear associated with health.

b. The importance of self-concept

Focuses on the development of self-concept through individuals who are actively engaged. Based on social interaction with others, individuals develop self-concept through interaction with others, Self-concept forms an important motive for Mead's behavior often stating this as: “The particular kind of role thinking - imagining how we look to another person” or “Ability to see yourself in the reflection of another glass”.

The inward pressure of the self from the mind and the dominance of “me”, the family-peer commentary forms a negative self-concept and confidence. When the individual is in a play stage by meeting the expectations of people to lose weight, at this stage the diet is considered not a serious thing so less motivated. They also play the role of the game stage where a person begins to have his status and starts thinking about the status of others in this Hughes who has managed to lose weight up to 75 kg. Here they are required to understand the role of themselves and the role of others. In the generalized stage the two infectives are required to be able to lose weight and achieve the ideal body shape.

c. Relationship between individuals and society

Focuses on the relationship between individual freedom and society, where social norms restrict the behavior of each individual but ultimately each individual who determines the choices that exist in social society. Intends to explain the regularity and changes in social processes. Associated assumptions are individuals and community groups influenced by cultural and social processes, social structures generated through social interaction.

At the level of the structure, Society is a social relationship created, constructed and constructed by each individual in the community, and each individual engages in actively and voluntarily chosen behaviors. When the mass media, social media, the profession, and culture construct the ideal form. Women with bodies not ideal will tend to feel marginalized. For those who have a negative self-concept of the matter it will make it withdraw from the social environment. The psychological impact will ultimately affect the role-taking process in the community.
Conclusion and Suggestion

Conclusion

Based on the elaboration of research results and discussion, the conclusion of this research is as follows:

1. Mead defines the mind as a social phenomenon that grows and develops in social processes as a result of interaction. The concept of the mind itself is more a process than a product. This means that consciousness is not an outsider catch, but is actively constantly changing and developing. In this regard, Mead elaborates on language and mind relations. He thinks the mind helps the language to increase capacity in determining objects in the social environment, through the formation of significant symbols, using symbols as a stimulus to generate responses from others, trying to read and interpret other people's gestures and use this stimulus in response and provide alternative imagination of the stimulus and response from the environment.

2. “I” which can be translated as “I” is a unique, impulsive, spontaneous, unorganized, purposeless, and unpredictable part of a person, whereas “Me” translated “I” is generalized others, and guides. Me is a socially acceptable and adapted behavior. Both “I” and “me” are both necessary for social relationships, where “I” is a subjective formulation of the self when confronted with others. While “me” is the uptake of others, through which the interanalization process is then adopted to form “I” next. And in every interaction will change “I” and “me” dynamically. In the context of communication, the change raises optimism, which is any communication will cause change. About the size of the change and what kind of change it wants depends on the strategy and effectiveness of the communication.

3. Society is practically a collection of self-interacting in a wider environment of personal, intimate, and community relationships. The institutions of society therefore comprise the same response. The Society is nurtured by the ability of individuals to engage in role-taking and generalized others.

4. The ideal body for most Indonesian women still follows the growing stereotypes in the neighborhood. From the research done, the ideal body is a body that has a proportional ratio. Having a slim and skinny body is just an additional value of having a good looking body. However, having a healthy body is the ideal definition desired by women in general.

Suggestion

Further research can be done by using more number of informants with more diverse categories of informants, such as: Hughes follower successful account with his diet, follower who participated in hypnotherapy classes, backgrounds of different informants for the phenomenon that depicted more variations. The further research is open to use other communication and social theories, which can explore the phenomenon from different angles.
Researchers advocate the dissemination of knowledge to the reader to recognize and eliminate the negative labeling of obese women because it affects the psychological and shapes the views of society. In addition, seek early education on how to live healthy, be confident and respect others not based on physical appearance.

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