
The Shift in Feminine Values on Social Media Towards Male Students Self-Concept

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Abstract

The term gender was proposed by social scientists with the aim of explaining the differences between women and men who have innate and cultural formations. Society still emphasizes traditional predetermined gender identities, including in terms of appearance and physical appearance, but the development of the times has resulted in an embedded gender construct in society regarding what is considered feminine and masculine that is slowly shifting. The purpose of this study is to analyze how changes in feminine values on social media shape the self-concept of students at the Islamic University of Riau. This research was conducted based on a phenomenological approach that aims to understand the subjective experiences of individuals, using the snowball sampling method with the determination of criteria that produced nine informants. The results of the study show that the shift in feminine values on social media has shaped students' self-concepts, but not changed overall, where the ideal self-concept is still maintained. Rogers' self-concept is reflected in research on student self-concept at the Islamic University of Riau which shows that the external environment, including social media, influences the formation of self-concept. Meanwhile, when viewed from Hurlock's self-concept, the study concluded that the majority of students who used feminine attributes felt more appropriate and comfortable physically and emotionally. However, because social and environmental factors do not consider it appropriate, they sometimes choose which attributes are appropriate to wear.

Keyword: Social media, femininity, self-concept, gender identity

Introduction

Humans have biological differences, these differences between men and women generally do not cause differences of opinion. In contrast to the gender difference between masculine and feminine which gives rise to many advantages and disadvantages (Aniqurrohman, 2023). This may be related to what is and is not allowed, or the behaviors identified with each gender and taboos that must be exchanged. That taboo things have to do with the stereotypes believed by each culture. Stereotypes are things that are believed and considered true or reasonable from a group to people inside or outside that group. Often stereotypes are subjective, as they are based on interpretations we generate based on different cultural perspectives and backgrounds (Ramadani et al., 2024). Gender is defined as a sociocultural construct that distinguishes masculine and feminine characteristics. The term gender was proposed by social scientists with the aim of explaining the differences between women and men who have innate and cultural formations. Gender is a difference in roles, functions, and responsibilities between men and women that is the result of social construction and can change according to the times (Maulida, 2021).

One type of stereotype comes from the view of gender roles themselves. There is a lot of injustice against gender that stems from the stereotypes given to them. There are

different ways to look at gender development. Some emphasize biological factors in male behavior and others emphasize social or cognitive factors. Society still emphasizes traditional gender identity that has been predetermined, but gender identity has shifted and made changes to social norms (Randan et al., 2026). At this time in society, there has been a change in the representation of men and women. The representation of men and women in society is related to the value of masculine and feminine that have been constructed by society. Society provides cultural gender differences by requiring men to show and highlight the masculine side and feminine side for women (Diniyah et al., 2023).

Masculinity and femininity are not static concepts; rather, they are constantly evolving along with social and cultural changes. The long history of gender inequality between men and women has created a social hierarchy that impacts various aspects of life, from the workplace to family relationships. In patriarchal societies, masculinity is often positioned as the dominant standard, while femininity is considered more subordinate (Safriyanto et al., 2024). However, with the emergence of feminist movements and gender studies, there are efforts to challenge these traditional norms and strive for gender equality. Men and women are narrated by society with various identifications, including in appearance. Women are synonymous with creatures who care about their appearance and beauty. Meanwhile, men as figures who do not care about appearance and do work that is identical to the masculine realm (Hisyam et al., 2024).

As we already know that society in general, has reconstructed their thinking about the male figure. However, because there is a change in human thinking related to several things, what is embedded in human thinking can change. There are several factors that can change human mindset and behavior, including economic, technological, geographical, social and cultural conditions (Alfian & Yahya, 2020). The development of the times has resulted in gender constructions that have been embedded in society regarding what is considered feminine and masculine to slowly shift. This results in the dividing line between the two gender identities is no longer clear and firm, the division of feminine and masculine values among men and women is increasingly fluid and not rigid. Social constructions regarding men and women continue to undergo changes over time, including in terms of appearance and masculine and feminine values embedded in society. Self-concept is an individual's perception of themselves, formed through personal experiences and interactions with their environment. During adolescence, self-concept becomes a crucial aspect, as it influences how adolescents behave and value themselves (Pracilia et al., 2024). Furthermore, self-concept also plays a vital role in successful communication.

According to Rogers, every individual has two self-characteristics: a) The self we perceive (I or me), which is our perception of our true self (real self), and b) Our ideal/desired self (ideal self), which is our perception of who we want to be (Surbakti et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Hurlock defines self-concept as a self-image based on physical, social, emotional, aspirational, and achievement. The Real Self is the individual's current state of being, and the Ideal Self is the state of being that the individual aspires to achieve. Self-concept is the part of the phenomenal space that is realized and symbolized, that is, the "I" is the center of reference of every experience (Arifin, 2020). Self-concept consists of elements such as individual characteristics and abilities, perceptions and concepts of

self-relationships with others and the environment as well as goals and ideas within oneself. Self develops from the individual's interaction with his environment and the individual will try to behave according to that self (Hakim et al., 2021).

According to Frits, self-concept is not something that is carried from birth. The formation of a person's self-concept is inseparable from the role of parents and their environment. Family is the first place of interaction that a child gets early in life. A person's self-concept can develop in a negative direction if he makes a negative judgment about himself. The individual will never feel good enough and always feels that there is something wrong with him (Ichi, 2021). Meanwhile, Hurlock defines self-concept as a self-image based on physical, social, emotional, aspirational, and achievement. Adolescents are the largest community in Indonesian society that uses social media regularly. The initial reason they were so active in using social media was to seek attention, ask for opinions, and grow their image, but over time it eventually became dependent (Muharom et al., 2024). Although social media has a positive impact on adolescents, when it is difficult for them to escape from activities related to social media, it will have a less positive impact. A number of studies show that as a result of excessive use of social media, adolescents are found to experience incongruence in their self-concept. Incunty occurs because there is a gap between the real self and the ideal self.

In general, students are thought to possess a high degree of intelligence together with the capacity for logical thought and careful planning. The complimentary concepts of cognition and action are shown in students' capacity to think critically and act swiftly and precisely. Students between the ages of 18 and 25 are considered to be in the transitional stage between late adolescence and early adulthood from a developmental standpoint. Strengthening life orientation and making consistent personal decisions are the main developmental goals at this stage. Research on gender in the context of social media can be found quite extensively in academic journals, some of which analyze gender in general (Bakhyt et al., 2025; Jung, 2022; Trisianti, 2026). However, there are also many studies that focus solely on women Gowda (2024) and Ren et al. (2022) or men Alamsyah & Sumanti (2023), Arifa & Sari (2023), Ching & Azeharie (2021), Pratama (2023) as well as research using other methods, such as semiotics. There is also research on the same theme, which also focuses on changes in the way men dress in Indonesia, but is not linked to the values of femininity, and there are differences in the cities where the research is located, where location influences the formation of a person's self-concept because each location certainly has a different culture (Arnalda & Anmedisa, 2025).

From several gender studies related to women or men in social media, research on how femininity values affect men is still limited, creating a gap in understanding the complex dynamics of gender. There is uncertainty regarding the role of social media in the formation of male identity influenced by femininity values. The long-term effects of exposure to femininity values on social media on men's self-concept is an under-researched area. Activities on social media can serve as social support and identification that differ from offline experiences, influencing how male students perceive themselves, and acting as a mediator in how femininity values affect self-concept. This research can offer new insights into how online experiences shape gender identity and potentially reveal the impact of femininity values on male identity and self-concept in the digital era, as well as expand the understanding of gender and media relations. Based on several

previous studies mentioned earlier, this research can fill the gaps that have not been addressed by previous studies by providing new insights into the dynamics of gender identity in the digital era, as well as the social implications of this phenomenon on the formation of male student identities.

Research topics are bound to evolve all the time and evolve from one paradigm to another. Nowadays, research themes on gender are also increasingly diverse, for this reason the state of the art is needed to ensure the novelty and position of this research theme among other gender research themes. The state of the art in this study is taken from several previous studies that have a similar theme to the proposed research title and will be a comparison and reference. The research is entitled *Construction of Ideal Masculinity Through Popular Culture Consumption by Urban Adolescents*, by Arum Budiastuti. This study discusses how urban adolescents build the meaning of ideal masculinity through the consumption of popular culture. The results showed that gender values associated with the concept of older men (fathers) were important markers of the construction of ideal masculinity among the interviewed adolescents. These masculine forms are closer to the ideal Javanese aristocratic masculinity associated with responsibility, reliability, patience, and being a protector. However, the subjects studied showed an attempt to negotiate this traditional masculinity with the masculine norms they derive from popular culture (Widyawati & Andalas, 2020).

Departing from the previous description, the problem of this research lies in how The Shift in Femininity Values on social media toward the Self-concept of Male Students, especially at the Universitas Islam Riau. The research results will be discussed with reference to Carl Rogers humanistic theory and also Hurlock's self-concept theory, where the theories of these two experts are considered to be most appropriate to the phenomena being studied.

Method

This research will be conducted based on a phenomenological approach, which aims to understand individual subjective experiences. In phenomenological studies, according to Banunaek et al. (2021), experience is defined as the conscious experience of a person, group of people, or group of living animals. Human experience is studied in phenomenological research through a comprehensive description of the individual being examined (Nasir et al., 2023). The data produced in the field will be presented in a descriptive qualitative form used in this research is qualitative data, with a descriptive method. The determination of this data source is carried out using the snowball sampling technique, which is a method to identify, select and take samples in a network or continuous chain of relationships. This technique requires a key informant who will be the first source to be interviewed, then the key informant will provide a referral to the researcher to get the next informant. In this technique, the interview will be stopped if the answer has reached a saturation point. The determination of key informants based on the following indicators: a. Active student of Universitas Islam Riau; b. Male students with masculine appearance; c. Wearing attributes or accessories that are commonly worn by women; d. Willing to be interviewed

Data sources are one of the most vital in research. In this study, primary data was obtained by interview techniques. The secondary data in this study are the results of

observations, literature studies, research results (journals) articles and others. There are many methods in data collection, namely tests, interviews, observations, stratified scales and documentation (Romdona et al., 2025). In this study, the researcher used several data collection techniques, those are: a) Interview. Interviews were conducted with informants who met the established criteria, delving deeply into the informants' experiences. b) Documentation. Some of the data needed in the research is stored in materials in the form of diary, documentation and so on. The nature of data that is documentation is limited to space and time so that it provides an opportunity for researchers to find out things that have happened in the past

Data analysis in qualitative research is carried out from the beginning of the researcher's field study, namely since the researcher began to conduct questions and field notes. The data analysis technique used by the researcher is the analysis technique (Rachman et al., 2024). This research was conducted at Universitas Islam Riau, with a duration of one year. Data collection methods include interviews and documentation. Interviews were conducted directly to obtain the subjects' perceptions and thought patterns regarding the research problem, while documentation provided historical data in the form of records, letters, and artifacts. In this study, the Triangulation technique is used. Triangulation is essentially a multi-media approach that researchers carry out when collecting and analyzing data.

Results and Discussion

In recent years, social media platforms have become an integral part of daily life, significantly to form individuals' self-perception and social interactions. The proliferation of diverse and often idealized representations of femininity on these platforms has raised concerns about its potential impact on male viewers, particularly young adults. This study delves into how these evolving portrayals of femininity influence the self-concept of male students at the Universitas Islam Riau, a predominantly conservative institution. This research involved nine informants from the Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics and Business, Faculty of Communication Sciences, and Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, aged between 20-22, who were obtained by snowball sampling technique, by first determining key informants who meet the criteria.

The concept of masculine men has evolved over time and varies between cultures. Physical traits that are often associated with masculinity are also very diverse and constantly changing. However, the results of the study showed that the informants were of the opinion that the physical characteristics of male masculine men were: neat, cared about the way they dressed, their way of speaking was dashing, not rude, calm, liked sports, dressed mostly in dark colors, had a firm posture, had a muscular body, was not weak, did not wear accessories. These characteristics are actually relatively the same as the characteristics of masculinity in general since ancient times, but for attributes/accessories there has been a slight shift, where some informants consider that in this era the accessories of women and men are almost the same, for example, necklaces, rings, bracelets. It's just that the type, color and motives, as well as the material make it different. All informants have physical characteristics that describe masculine characteristics, such as tall, large and sturdy, have mustaches and/or beards, muscular

bodies, but they wear attributes that impress femininity or are commonly used by women, such as: nail art, doll bags, pearl necklaces, women's clothes (crop tops and culottes), lip tint. These attributes have been used since entering college (especially since COVID-19), but some have also been used since junior high school and high school.

Some of the reasons put forward are because just for fun, during the COVID-19 pandemic they do a lot of activities at home, including online lecture activities, so that they have very little time to hang out with friends in real life and look more at social media. Another reason is because from the social media I see many male public figures who wear female attributes and look cool and the informant assumes that this is current. After COVID-19 subsided and they returned to active college, the prank became something they still did because they felt comfortable. The analysis of the interview results above is actually not surprising, especially if you know that some of the fashion items or attributes used by women today were originally created for men. However, some do not always use attributes, still looking at the situation and place, this is due to the support factor from family, peer groups and institutions where Merke studied. Although only a small number of informants families are opposed, most of the other informants' families support the use of these attributes, and there are even parents who buy other accessories for their children to use. Families who oppose for some time do not mind as long as they do not use drugs, and families who continue to protest are outsmarted by the informants by removing the attribute while at home.

In a research that also used Carl Rogers' humanistic theory, self-concept is defined as an individual's tendency to act in a way that actualizes themselves, leading to their differentiation from a set of experiences (Umarta & Mangundjaya, 2023). Rogers also stated that childhood experiences are crucial and impact a person's self-concept. Self-concept is not immediately acquired at birth; rather, it is a series of processes that continuously develop and differentiate one individual from another. That Rogers' Self-concept is reflected in the research toward male students self-concept at Universitas Islam Riau, which show that the external environment, including social media, influences the formation of self-concept. Some even experienced shifts in students' self-concepts. However, these shifts in self-concepts were not entirely successful. Changes occurred when there was acceptance from the surrounding environment or significant self-confidence within the students themselves.

Meanwhile, when viewed based on Hurlock's self-concept, the study concluded that the majority of students who used feminine attributes felt physically and emotionally more appropriate and comfortable. However, because social and environmental factors don't consider them appropriate, they sometimes choose which attributes are appropriate to wear. The results of the study also show that peer groups support and even praise the appearance of informants who wear female attributes. Regarding to the Rogers, between the real-self and the ideal of the informants have changed, in the sense that even though socially Indonesian society, most still consider the ideal concept of masculine men to be as mentioned earlier at the beginning of this section, but the concept of real-self of the informants is different, they feel increased confidence when using female attributes or accessories. They feel that their appearance is more impressive and keep up with the times. In addition, they feel that they have their own uniqueness so that

they become individuals whose character can be seen from their external appearance. The negative response from some parties is not really cared about. They think that attributes or accessories are just appearances, the important thing is to behave well, maintain physical and mental health by exercising, worship, maintaining body hygiene, behaving well. For the informants, as long as their identity remains male, it doesn't matter.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that The Shift in Femininity Values on social media to form the Self-Concept of Male Students at the Universitas Islam Riau does not completely change the ideal self-concept of students, in the sense that in real-self they remain normal men and behave like men in general, a shift only from appearance or appearance, which is due to wanting to keep up with the times. However, ideally, they still maintain the ideal concept of men socially in terms of appearance, by using female attributes or accessories according to the situation and conditions. In the future, it is hoped that there will be research with similar themes that are processed with different methods or theories, in order to get different points of view.

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