Understanding Student Self-Confidence: Impacts of Body Shaming, Self-Compassion, and Gender in Higher Education

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Abstract

Low self-confidence is a significant factor contributing to various academic and social difficulties among students, hindering their personal development. Previous research and observations at Padang State University indicate that many students continue to struggle with low self-confidence. This study aims to analyze the relationship between body shaming, self-compassion, and gender on student self-confidence, using a quantitative approach with a 2x2x2 factorial design. A sample of 362 students from the Faculty of Education, spread across six departments, was selected using cluster random sampling. Data analysis was conducted using three-way ANOVA. The results of the study revealed several key findings: (1) Overall, students at the Faculty of Education demonstrated high self-confidence, despite body shaming experiences; (2) In terms of self-compassion, students with higher levels of self-compassion exhibited greater self-confidence on average; (3) Gender did not significantly impact self-confidence, as there was little difference between male and female students; (4) Students who had not experienced body shaming had higher self-confidence than those who had been subjected to it; (5) There were significant differences in self-confidence based on self-compassion, with higher self-compassion correlating with higher self-confidence, while lower self-compassion was linked to lower self-confidence; and (6) There was no interaction effect between body shaming, self-compassion, and gender in explaining student self-confidence levels. This indicates that body shaming and self-compassion influence self-confidence similarly for both male and female students. These findings have implications for the development of counseling services in higher education, suggesting that targeted interventions can help improve student self-confidence, particularly by addressing body shaming and fostering self-compassion.

Keywords: self-confidence, body shaming, self-compassion, college students.

Introduction

Students are individuals currently enrolled in a university, typically aged 18-25 (Hayuningtias, 2020), which classifies them as being in their late adolescence (Hurlock, 1990; Ramanda, 2022). During their time in college, students face numerous external and internal challenges as they work to develop their potential and complete their studies on time. One of the key factors necessary for success in this process is a high level of self-confidence (Ningsih & Daharnis, 2021). Self-confidence

is defined as a belief in one's own abilities, characterized by a positive self-perception and an absence of comparison with others (Putra, Daharnis & Syahniar, 2013; Werianti & Ifdil, 2023).

Another perspective describes self-confidence as the ability to trust one's capabilities, act independently when making decisions, maintain a positive self-concept, and express opinions boldly (Lauster, 2015). High self-confidence enables individuals to lead better lives, as it allows them to socialize easily and experience life with greater enthusiasm (Rerung, 2021). Conversely, low self-confidence often hinders students' academic performance and engagement in the learning process (Salsabila, 2023).

Self-confidence is an essential aspect of student life in higher education that cannot be overlooked (Suryanti, 2017). However, many students still struggle with low self-confidence, which negatively impacts their academic performance, personal development, and social relationships (Annisa, 2020). Various factors contribute to self-confidence, with research showing that it can be influenced by self-image (Rachman, 2019) and peer support (Eraydin, 2017).

Several factors can contribute to low self-confidence among students, including body shaming related to physical appearance (Laksmini, 2022) and low self-compassion (Prastya & Trisnawati, 2020). A survey by BLISS magazine, involving 5,053 teenagers, revealed that 90% of them disliked their body shape due to body shaming (Sahrina, Syarifudin, & Darmawan, 2021). Additionally, in 2018, the police handled 966 cases of body shaming across Indonesia (Newsdetik.com, 2018). In another study, 129 students (79.1%) reported experiencing body shaming, which significantly affected their self-confidence (Derang, 2023). This issue is also evident among students at Padang State University, as reflected in the individual counseling problem recapitulation at the LP3S UNP Guidance and Counseling Service Center in August 2023.

In addition to body shaming, self-compassion may influences an individual's self-confidence. Individuals with high self-compassion are likely to exhibit higher self-confidence, as they can cultivate empathy for themselves during times of disturbance, failure, disappointment, or suffering

(Finlay-Jones et al., 2023). Conversely, those who view their lives as particularly imperfect or miserable tend to experience lower self-confidence (Hayuningtias, 2020). Prastya et al., (2020) indicates that the majority of students fall within the medium self-compassion category, with 79.03% of respondents, while 17.74% are categorized as low, and only 3.23% are identified as high in self-compassion (Halim, 2015).

Students with moderate self-compassion often demonstrate a tendency to understand and accept failure, as well as to provide themselves with comfort during difficult times. They recognize that imperfection is a universal human trait. A separate study examining first-year students from outside Java at Semarang State University found that 87.27% of students fall into the moderate self-compassion category, while 12.73% are categorized as high (Salim, 2023). This suggests that students with moderate and high self-compassion generally possess a sense of satisfaction with their circumstances and are better equipped to accept disappointing realities, allowing them to approach new challenges with increased confidence and resilience following setbacks (Hayuningtias, 2020).

Low self-confidence frequently hinders students from realizing their full potential (Husni, 2023). This challenge is particularly evident in social environments where self-confidence is essential for public engagement, such as expressing opinions in lectures and participating in group activities. Lestari & Kurniawati (2021) indicated that students' self-confidence levels were moderate, with 70% falling into this category. Similarly, a study at Medan Area University found that students' self-confidence levels were low, averaging 72.5 (Madhy et al., 2022).

In another study by Ulfa (2022) examined the relationship between body shaming and self-confidence among students at Madrasah Aliyah. This research highlights the significant differences in self-confidence levels between students who experience body shaming and those who do not. It contrasts with the current study, which analyzes self-confidence in relation to body shaming, self-compassion, and gender, using a sample of students from the Faculty of Education at Padang State University in West Sumatra Province.

The proposed research presents a novel and original perspective by reviewing and comparing prior

studies, such as the work by Rahmawati & Zuhdi (2022), which examines the impact of body shaming on student self-confidence. Their findings highlight that body shaming often originates from peers, family, and the surrounding community, leading individuals to feel inferior and lack self-confidence. However, while this study focuses exclusively on body shaming's effects, the current research expands the analysis to include self-compassion and gender. Furthermore, no existing studies have specifically explored the interplay between body shaming, self-compassion, and gender in relation to students' self-confidence. This gap underscores the importance and relevance of the research to be conducted.
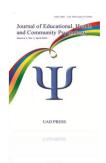
Method

Design

This study uses Analysis of Variance with Three Way Anova to see the comparison of students' self-confidence levels in terms of body shaming and self-compassion and gender, so that the influence of body shaming and self-compassion levels and gender on students' self-confidence can be described and analyzed using a 2x2x2 factorial design.

Participants

The sample in this study consisted of 362 active students from the Faculty of Education across the 2021, 2022, and 2023 academic years, participating during the January-June 2024 semester. The students were from various departments, including Guidance and Counseling, Educational Administration, Early Childhood Education, Special Education, Non-Formal Education, Elementary School Teacher Education, and Educational Technology. Informed consent was obtained from participants prior to their involvement in the research.

Measurement

Before the research scale was used, the researcher conducted an estimation of the validity and reliability of the measurement tool. The content validity method, using professional judgment, was employed to estimate the validity of the scale. Meanwhile, the internal consistency method, utilizing Cronbach's alpha statistical analysis, was used to estimate the reliability of the measurement tool.

The self-confidence scale was developed based on Ghufron's self-confidence scale (2010) and consists of 31 items designed to measure the level of self-confidence in students. This scale utilizes a five-point response format: very appropriate, appropriate, quite appropriate, not appropriate, and very not appropriate. Scores for positive statements are assigned as follows: very appropriate = 5, appropriate = 4, quite appropriate = 3, not appropriate = 2, and very not appropriate = 1. Conversely, for negative statements, the scoring is reversed: very appropriate = 1, appropriate = 2, quite appropriate = 3, not appropriate = 4, and very not appropriate = 5. Three sample items for the self-confidence scale include: "I believe in my ability to achieve my goals," "I feel confident when speaking in front of a group," and "I trust my judgment in making decisions." The alpha reliability coefficient for this self-confidence scale is 0.832.

Similarly, the body shaming scale was developed based on Edi's body shaming scale (2021) and comprises 23 items that measure the level of body shaming experienced by students. It employs the same five-point response scale: very appropriate, appropriate, quite appropriate, not appropriate, and very not appropriate. Positive statements are scored as follows: very appropriate = 5, appropriate = 4, quite appropriate = 3, not appropriate = 2, and very not appropriate = 1. For negative statements, the scoring system is reversed: very appropriate = 1, appropriate = 2, quite appropriate = 3, not appropriate = 4, and very not appropriate = 5. Three example items from the body shaming scale are: "I have been teased about my appearance," "I often compare my body to others negatively," and "I feel embarrassed about my body in social situations." The alpha reliability coefficient for this body shaming scale is 0.863.

Lastly, the self-compassion scale, based on Finlay-Jones, Bluth, & Neff's theory (2023), consists of 23 items aimed at assessing students' levels of self-compassion. This scale also uses the five-point response format of very appropriate, appropriate, quite appropriate, not appropriate, and very not appropriate. The scoring for positive statements is the same as in the previous scales, while negative statements follow the same reverse scoring system. Three sample items for the self-compassion scale include: "I treat myself with kindness when I fail," "I recognize that suffering is a part of the human experience," and "I allow myself to feel my emotions without judgment." The

alpha reliability coefficient for the self-compassion scale is 0.875.

Data analysis

ANOVA was employed to analyze the data in this study, with normality and homogeneity assumption tests conducted prior to hypothesis testing. The data were analyzed using SPSS for Windows version 25.

Results

Based on Table 1, the levels of student self-confidence vary depending on body shaming, self-compassion, and gender. Among male students, those with high body shaming and high self-compassion have an average self-confidence score of 102, while those with high body shaming and low self-compassion have a lower mean score of 78. Male students with low body shaming and high self-compassion exhibit higher self-confidence with a mean of 109.4, whereas those with low body shaming and low self-compassion have a mean of 92. For female students, those with high body shaming and high self-compassion have an average score of 99.34, while those with high body shaming and low self-compassion score significantly lower, with a mean of 67.22. Female students with low body shaming and high self-compassion show the highest self-confidence with a mean of 112.51, while those with low body shaming and low self-compassion have a mean of 83. These results highlight the influence of both body shaming and self-compassion on self-confidence across genders.

In general, the results of hypothesis processing can be seen in Table 2. Based on Table 2, it can be seen that the results of hypothesis testing on the body shaming variable obtained an F-count value of 14.594 at a degree of freedom (dk) of 1 and a Sig. value of 0.000. It can be concluded that there is a significant difference in student self-confidence based on body shaming. Then the results of hypothesis testing on the Self-compassion variable obtained an F-count value of 16.530 at a degree of freedom (dk) of 1 and a Sig. value of 0.000. It can be concluded that there is a significant difference in student self-confidence based on self-compassion.
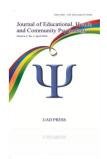
Table 1
Three-Way ANOVA 2x2x2 Factorial Design

Gender (A)	Body shaming (B)	Self-compassion(C)		Average
		Height (C1)	Low (C2)	
Male (A1)	Height (B1)	102	78	
	Low (B2)	109.4	92	102.6
Female (A2)	Height (B3)	99.4	67.2	
	Low (B4)	112.5	83	105.5
BS Average	Tall			99.6
	Low			112.4
SC Average	Tall			109.1
	Low			73.4

Meanwhile, the results of hypothesis testing on the gender variable obtained an F count value of 1.442 at 1 degree of freedom and a Sig. value of 0.231. It can be concluded that there is no significant difference in student self-confidence based on gender. Then there is no interaction between body shaming and self-compassion and gender in explaining the level of student self-confidence. This can be seen from the results of the hypothesis test obtained an F count value of 2.319 at 1 degree of freedom and a Sig. value of 0.129.

Table 2
Summary of 3-Way Factorial ANOVA

Source	Dk	F	P	Interpretation
Body_shaming	1	14,594	,000	Significant
Self_Compassion	1	61,530	,000	Significant
Gender	1	1,442	,231	Not significant
*Body_shaming * Self_Compassion Interaction*	1	,612	,435	Not significant
Body_shaming Interactions Gender*	1	,155	,694	Not significant
Self_Compassion Interaction Gender*	1	1,535	,216	Not significant
*Body_shaming * Self_Compassion Interaction* Gender*	1	2,319	,129	Not significant

Discussion

The ANOVA analysis results provide strong evidence of differences in student self-confidence concerning body shaming and self-compassion. Specifically, lower instances of body shaming and higher levels of self-compassion are associated with increased self-confidence among students. The coefficient of determination indicates that 57.3% of the variability in self-confidence can be explained by changes in body shaming and self-compassion levels. This suggests a significant relationship between these factors and student self-confidence, reinforcing the validity of the findings and implying that the connection is not coincidental but holds substantial implications.

These findings can be understood within the broader context of factors influencing student self-confidence. Students who experience body shaming often become sensitive, withdrawn, and embarrassed in public settings (Fitria & Febrianti, 2020). The nature of body shaming experiences varies among individuals, with common insults relating to weight, height, skin color, or other negative comments about physical appearance (Rahmawati & Zuhdi, 2022). Importantly, body shaming can originate not only from peers but also from family, neighbors, and even one's internal dialogue. Many individuals unknowingly engage in self-bullying through critical thoughts about their appearance, such as believing they are ugly, worthless, or failures (Gilbert & Miles, 2002).

Self-compassion is an important factor that can enhance an individual's confidence (Finlay-Jones, Bluth, & Neff, 2023). It refers to a person's ability to show kindness and concern for themselves when facing life's challenges, as well as their capacity to accept their shortcomings and acknowledge that suffering, failure, and imperfection are part of the human experience. Individuals with high self-compassion are better equipped to understand themselves, avoid self-harm, and nurture self-care during times of disappointment. They tend to appreciate what they have and maintain confidence in their circumstances, despite their imperfections (Sari, 2018).

Given this understanding, it is crucial for the university's Guidance and Counseling Service Center to actively provide psychological support to students experiencing body shaming. Educational initiatives are necessary to raise awareness about the dangers of body shaming and to foster self-

compassion among students, which can facilitate their learning processes. By cultivating confidence in their abilities and potential, students can better navigate their academic journeys. Therefore, it is essential to explore the interplay between body shaming, self-compassion, and gender in shaping student self-confidence.

This study examines students' self-confidence in relation to body shaming, self-compassion, and gender. However, several limitations should be noted. First, the research is confined to the population within the Faculty of Education. Second, the analysis focuses solely on the interplay between body shaming, self-compassion, and gender concerning self-confidence. To enhance students' self-confidence, guidance and counseling services should be implemented, particularly targeting issues related to body shaming and fostering self-compassion.

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship and differences in self-confidence levels among college students, future researchers could benefit from conducting longitudinal studies to explore the long-term detrimental effects of body shaming and low self-compassion on psychological well-being. It is essential for future research to utilize robust designs, culturally appropriate measurement tools, and comprehensive sampling strategies. Such approaches will enhance the reliability, validity, and applicability of the findings in both academic and practical settings.

Conclusion

After conducting statistical analysis, hypothesis testing, and reviewing the results of this study, several conclusions can be drawn. First, there are differences in student self-confidence based on body shaming; students who did not experience body shaming had a higher average self-confidence score than those who did. This indicates that self-confidence is greater in students who have not faced body shaming compared to those who have.

Second, variations in self-confidence levels were also found based on self-compassion. Students with high self-compassion exhibited higher self-confidence than their peers with low self-compassion.

This suggests that greater self-compassion correlates with increased self-confidence, while lower self-compassion is associated with diminished self-confidence.

Additionally, the analysis revealed no significant differences in self-confidence based on gender, indicating that gender does not play a determining role in self-confidence levels among students. Lastly, there is no interaction effect between body shaming, self-compassion, and gender in explaining the students' self-confidence levels, further emphasizing that these factors operate independently in influencing self-confidence.

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