

Ideal Body Standards: A Myth for Modern Women

Riska Mutiah¹

¹UIN Mataram; riskamutiah@uinmataram.ac.id

Abstract:

There is no body established outside of history and the body continues to suffer simultaneous redefinition even in the current day. In certain cultures and civilizations, the human body is the site of ideological interpretation. The fashion industry controls ideal body standards through modeling agencies, which have evolved into body training facilities that draw the attention of many young women. Using phenomenological research and Alfred Schutz's theory as an analytical tool, this study investigates body ideals that are myths for modern women. This study finds that the models share a common stock of knowledge when it comes to gazing at the body, which is known as intersubjectivity. Body knowledge is transferred through modeling schools and parents participation. Because the models' careers are dependent on the agency, internalization of these principles is simple. Although the fashion industry's body standards are unclear and lack defined benchmarks, the model assumes that the body training procedure is not a burden but rather a kind of responsibility for their job professionally.

Keywords: Ideal body standards, models, modern women

1. Introduction

According to Foucault, no body exists outside of history. The body undergoes a parallel reinterpretation from Plato's age to the Roman Empire, early Christianity, the Renaissance century, and modern human society today. According to Simone de Beauvoir, the human body is more than just a biological organism determined by the physiological function of its organs. The human body is a situation; it is the locus and the process of ideological interpretation between a number of cultural interpretations that attach specific values to the body and the values selected independently by the subject in a particular culture or civilization. This dialogical interpretation process will result in varied bodily values and appreciations (Lie, 2005)

The restricted value choices supplied by the market tend to inhibit the body's dialogic process in modern bodies. The fashion industry, as the dominant holder of authority over the modern body, has the power to regulate trends, dimensions, and the definition of beauty, particularly for women. Control of body standards is then institutionalized in the form of modeling agencies, which draw the interest of many young women. Models with a slim frame, ordinary height but unbalanced body weight, short arms and thighs, and pronounced facial bones are

trendy today. The more distinct a model's face, the more work opportunities she will receive. According to Wilson in Barnard (Barnard, 2011), fashion and clothing are inextricably tied to our bodies, as well as our gender and gender identities:

“When fashion emphasizes sexuality... When fashion appears in terms of gender, most of us feel threatened and uncomfortable. Especially for women, exaggerated and arbitrary standards of “beauty”... can be debilitating and even offensive.”

Barbie, the world's beauty icon, is essential for comprehending the modern physique. Barbie is culturally associated with current body images created by capitalism, consumerism, fanciful fantasies, and new body shaping technologies. It becomes a sign of how the body resists the boundaries that were previously considered to be the essence of origin. Barbie is a nascent icon of somatic consumerism, a bodybuilding technology motivated by the assumption that bodies can be whatever they want with enough money and effort. This evolution thus transforms the body into an aerobic instrument, a subject of plastic surgery, a nutrition experiment, and a piece of flesh ready to be created continually (Rogers, 1999).

The similar situation happened in Indonesia, where body model standards are naturally oriented toward the West as the hub of world fashion. Various reality shows look for popular models, such as *The Face*, which is hosted by supermodel Naomi Campbell, and *Next Top Model*, which is hosted by supermodel Tyra Banks. Only one winner Ayu Gani, the winner of *Asia Next Top Model* 2015, is an Indonesian model who was signed by Storm Models, a well-known modeling agency in London. The following is an episode of Indonesia's *Next Top Model*, which is currently broadcast on one of the private TV networks.

Malang has a plethora of recognized modeling companies. Models in the agency receive modeling, choreographer, and personality development training. We can readily find talent search event models as well. Starting with the selection of shopping center ambassadors, such as the election of Miss MATOS, MX Mall Ambassador, or modeling by department stores such as Ramayana. The events are organized annually and at shopping centers, which can easily capture the

attention of the general public. It is typical for modeling agencies to recruit models through these contests.

Young ladies are trained in this manner by modeling companies. As previously stated, this method is used to train models' bodies to attain the aesthetic standards demanded by the fashion industry. The concept of optimal height, weight, and body form is the key to comprehending the modern female body. In this case, the author will look at the ideal body standard, which is a big fallacy for modern women.

This article uses a qualitative approach to the type of phenomenological research. Phenomenology is research that seeks to reduce individual awareness in understanding a phenomenon that is experienced by the method of understanding (Kuswarno, 2009). Data collection techniques were carried out by interviews, observation and documentation of research subjects, namely models under the auspices of agencies in Malang City.

The theory of phenomenology, developed by Alfred Schutz, is used to analyze this paper. Schutz argues that phenomenology reconstructs real life according to how humans experience it. This is called intersubjectivity, which is the shared view of the world that is internalized through the socialization process. Intersubjectivity is not owned by individuals privately or personally, but is instead a shared value or common understanding among individuals in a community (Kuswarno, 2009).

Schutz (Schutz, 1967) argues that social reality is an intersubjective world, in which individuals do not each occupy their own unique mental, personal, and character world. Instead, they all exist in perspective adjustments to one another in the same reality. In short, the social world is a world that is known together by its inhabitants. Some of the points emphasized by Schutz are:

1. The social world is made up of commonsense knowledge. This is the knowledge that we take for granted and that we use to make sense of the world around us.
2. The social world is made up of typifications. These are mental shortcuts that we use to understand the world around us. For example, we might have a typification of "the doctor" as someone who is kind, caring, and knowledgeable about medicine.

3. The social world is made up of relevance structures. These are the things that are important to us and that we pay attention to. For example, a student might have a relevance structure that is focused on their studies, while a parent might have a relevance structure that is focused on their children.

Schutz's theory of social reality has been influential in a diverse fields, including sociology, anthropology, and philosophy. It provides a way of understanding how we make sense of the world around us and how we interact with others. In addition, here are some additional details about each of the points emphasized by Schutz:

1. Each individual's level of understanding of the world depends on the social distribution of knowledge (*social distribution of knowledge*). This understanding is obtained mostly not from the direct experience of each individual, but by learning from others;
2. Individuals act on the basis of a stock of knowledge, which (a) has been constructed by being passed down from other members of society, (b) originates from social stocks of knowledge, and (c) has been transferred to individuals through social arrangements such as raising children in families, teaching in schools, on-the-job training and, conversation among peers;
3. The individual's basic assumption of social reality is that this world is seen by others the same as he sees it. Of course, this does not mean that everything looks identical from one point of view, but the basic thing is each individual has a coordinated viewpoint on something. Schutz identified the 2 assumption models above, namely the reciprocal perspective (*the reciprocity of perspectives*) and point of view exchange (*the interchangeability of standpoints*).

This theory is utilized by Schutz to understand how humans defend their sense of being in an intersubjective environment (Cuff *et al.*, 2015).

Schutz also contends that the social environment must be viewed historically. Individual activities have a future (futura) and a past (pastness) motivation. Individual social activity is regarded as complicated. Projects are actions that combine parts of the present and the past. Because social activity is

so complicated, it is separated into two phases: phases in-order-to motive (go-to motive) as the next phase and *Weil-Motive* as the previous phase (Schutz, 1967).

2. Discussion

The data for this article were obtained by conducting interviews, observation and documentation on research subjects who work as models in the city of Malang. The list of research subjects can be seen in the following table:

No	No	Education	Height	Body weight	Reasons to Be a Model
1.	Amel	Masters	165 cm	47 kg	Own wishes supported by parents
2.	Feby	SMA	169 cm	52 kg	Parental directives
3.	Dhania	Student	172 cm	53 kg	Parental directives
4.	Ney	SMA	170 cm	47 kg	Own wishes supported by parents
5.	Dhea	Student	173 cm	50 kg	Own wishes supported by parents
6.	Difa	Student	170 cm	49 kg	Parental directives

Intersubjectivity is a shared view of the world by a community. It can be seen in the issue of beauty standards for female models. The research subjects, who are female models, have a shared stock of knowledge about their bodies.

They see their bodies as a commodity that must conform to ideal body standards. These standards are maintained through rigorous training and body management. There are three factors that motivate the research subjects to strive for their ideal bodies: (1) Competition with other models: Models are constantly competing with each other for jobs. This competition can lead to feelings of insecurity and pressure to conform to the ideal body type; (2) Dissatisfaction with their current bodies: Many models are dissatisfied with their current bodies. They may feel that they are not thin enough, tall enough, or have the right proportions. This dissatisfaction can lead to unhealthy eating habits and body image issues; (3) The influence of the agency: Modeling agencies have a strong influence on the bodies of their models. They often require models to maintain a certain weight and body fat percentage. This can lead to unhealthy dieting and exercise habits. The internalization of ideal body standards can have a negative impact both on the mental and physical health of models. It can lead to eating disorders, body dysmorphia, and low self-esteem. It is necessary to be aware of the dangers of these standards and to support models in developing a healthy body image.

The participation of parents in preparing their daughters so that they might grow into "ideal" women can be used to track the internalization of model body standards. The parents' instructions were not without reason, but were followed out because they perceived the potential or skill of children who had participated in modeling competitions since infancy. Aside from that, some parents enroll their children in modeling schools and agencies since their girl is considered a *tomboy*. Modeling companies or schools are involved in the socialization of ideal body standards. The research subjects trained their bodies there to obtain the perfect body form and be ready to enter the modeling business. The value internalization process for models in each agency is simple, given that the agency is a vital institution for a model's career.

The research subjects do not regard the modeling industry norms as a hardship as a result of this intersubjective internalization process. To get the perfect figure, people must follow a number of criteria, including exercise, food, and body maintenance. The research subjects believe that following all of the agency's guidelines is a type of professionalism for their professions. The research subjects are aware that their bodies are being shown as a display item, and they believe they have control over their bodies in order to obtain the perfect form.

There are several fascinating facts concerning intersubjectivity on the body shared by the research subjects, such as the researchers' failure to identify conventional standards for an ideal model's physique. The ideal body standard used by the modeling business is not the same as the body standard used by the health sector. Even the research subjects were only told about the desired physical standards of models orally by agency trainers or senior models. Setting ideal body standards for models is only possible if there is awareness or mutual agreement on whether the model's physique is attractive to the sight. In this situation, the fashion designer has a sizable stake.

According to the research subjects, designers' preferences for model bodies vary. On this premise, the agency exerted control to ensure that the models underwent body training in order to obtain the designer's ideal figure. Because designers' tastes change, the models must undergo continual body training as directed by the agency. Of course, if the models do not comply, their careers are jeopardized.

The ideal model body type is uncertain. There are no universally recognized benchmarks. All are built on meeting the tastes of fashion designers and agencies while adhering to the fashion industry's wheels. Contrary to popular belief, this does not make the models feel burdened by the different body training techniques they must go through in order to get the perfect body as desired by their designers and agencies. The participation of parents and modeling agencies in the process of passing body knowledge to models results in a common stock of knowledge among models that the body is a display item that must be constantly managed and trained in order to fit industry expectations and tastes. Due to the lack of conventional requirements on the model's body, the fashion agency and industry have influence over the body, allowing the fashion industry to freely recreate body standards according to their tastes.

Following that, we will analyze the social behaviors of research subjects who enter the realm of modeling and categorize them depending on their motivations. Schutz splits social action reasons into two categories: past motives and future motives. Koeswara, on the other hand divide it into three themes by including modern elements. The three themes are useful to utilize while studying events in female body models.

Past reasons are first and foremost. Because the models are used to it and have been involved in the modeling world since infancy, the purpose of the past is perceived as the reason for the models to survive in the modeling business. Ney is the research subject with prior motivations. When she was in first grade of high school, she was just getting into modeling, but she had always enjoyed wearing makeup and high heels, her modeling skill has been passed down through the generations. She had the backing of her family when he first ventured into the world of modeling, and she still does.

The present motive is the second motive. There are two research subjects that entered the realm of modeling with modern motives in the sense that they were only interested in the short term. Dhania and Feby mentioned that he became interested in modeling due to his passion for fashion. Dhania and Feby, on the other hand, have non-model statuses, Dhania as a student and Feby as a bank employee. Even when they have short-term causes, the constancy of their physical training does not suffer. As long as they are models, they must maintain a professional demeanor throughout their modeling jobs.

The future motive is the third motive. Amel and Dhea are two research subjects with potential motivations in the area of modeling. Amel claimed that he hopes to create a professional modeling school in Lombok, his homeland, in the future. As a result, Amel is highly consistent in sustaining her present modeling job. Meanwhile, Dhea, who only recently began modeling while in college, stated that she hopes to grow her profession by becoming a model not only in Malang but also in other major cities.

3. Conclusion

It may be argued that the models share a similar body of knowledge in perceiving their bodies as employees in the modeling industry, or what Schutz refers to as intersubjective knowledge. The model has gone through an internalization process about ideal body standards set by the fashion industry through agency management. Modeling schools and parental participation are used to convey bodily knowledge. Internalization of these ideals is easy owing to models' careers shifting based on the agency, where the agency works as a regulating unit for the bodies of these models. This motivates models to train their bodies on a daily basis through food, exercise, and body maintenance. Although

the fashion industry's body standards are unclear and lack precise benchmarks, models see the process of establishing and training their bodies as a sort of duty and professionalism towards their business.

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