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The Effect of Lipstick Use on Women's Self-Confidence

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effect of lipstick use on women's self-confidence, especially female students aged 18–20 years at Padang State University (UNP). Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 15 participants who actively use lipstick in their daily lives. The results of the study indicate that lipstick not only functions as a cosmetic tool, but also as a symbol of personal strength, a social communication tool, and a psychological need. Participants expressed that they felt more confident, braver to appear in public, and more ready to carry out campus activities after using lipstick. However, some participants also realized that there was a dependence on social aesthetic standards that influenced self-perception. These findings reinforce the view that beauty products play a complex role in shaping the identity and self-confidence of young women. Therefore, it is important to encourage empowering and contextual beauty education for the younger generation.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh penggunaan lipstick terhadap kepercayaan diri perempuan, khususnya pada mahasiswi berusia 18-20 tahun di Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP). Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologis, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap 15 partisipan yang aktif menggunakan lipstick dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lipstick tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai alat kosmetik, tetapi juga sebagai symbol kekuatan personal, alat komunikasi sosial, serta kebutuhan psikologis. Partisipan mengungkapkan bahwa mereka merasa lebih percaya diri, berani tampil di depan umum, dan lebih siap menjalani aktivitas kampus setelah menggunakan lipstick. Namun, sebagian partisipan juga menyadari adanya ketergantungan terhadap standar estetika sosial yang memengaruhi persepsi diri. Temuan ini memperkuat pandangan bahwa produk kecantikan berperan kompleks dalam pembentukan identitas dan kepercayaan diri perempuan muda. Oleh karena itu, penting untuk mendorong edukasi kecantikan yang memberdayakan dan kontekstual bagi generasi muda.

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INTRODUCTION

The beauty industry has rapidly grown into a dynamic global sector, with decorative cosmetics like lipstick serving as more than aesthetic products that represent self-identity, personal power, and women's freedom. This symbolic role is amplified by social media, celebrity trends, and empowerment campaigns, highlighting lipstick as a tool that significantly shapes women's self-confidence and public persona [1].

The beauty industry is undergoing a significant transformation with the adoption of digital promotions based on consumer retention, which have proven effective in increasing customer loyalty in the beauty services sector [2]. Beauty clinics are now utilizing interactive strategies on social media, strengthening emotional connections and fostering two-way communication to help women feel more confident in their self-care [3]. Marketing innovations like this encourage people, especially women, to be more open to using beauty products, including lipstick, as part of an effort to increase self-confidence both socially and psychologically [4].

This digital and cultural shift is not only widespread in Western countries but has also spread to various developing countries, including Indonesia. In major cities, women of all ages are increasingly open about using cosmetics, particularly lipstick, for both professional and personal purposes. Lipstick is even considered a "secret weapon" for boosting self-confidence in various social situations, such as job interviews, presentations, and informal social gatherings [5].

This phenomenon is especially evident among young, urban Indonesian women who are active on social media and exposed to global trends [6] and who associate wearing lipstick with feeling more attractive and prepared to appear in public, particularly during important situations. This suggests a significant correlation between lipstick use and self-confidence [7].

Using lipstick is not just a cosmetic routine; it also has a real impact on increasing women's self-confidence. Recent studies have shown that women who wear lipstick feel more attractive, bright, and fresh, making them more prepared for social interactions. Lipstick becomes a means of expressing personality, controlling one's appearance, and becoming a daily ritual of self-empowerment that impacts positive self-esteem.

Women's perceptions of beauty are subjective, yet they have a profound impact on self-confidence, self-love, and self-worth. The use of makeup, such as lipstick, can

contribute to these positive feelings. Furthermore, education-based beauty businesses continue to grow, driven by interest, talent, and family influence. Students and industry players are seen as capable of leveraging natural makeup and cosmetic product trends as both business opportunities and platforms for building self-confidence. Beauty products, including lipstick, have dual implications as personal branding tools and psychological empowerment for women amidst modern social dynamics.

One reason for this is the powerful visual culture in today's modern society. In an environment saturated with image and appearance, women often feel the need to conform to prevailing beauty standards for social acceptance. Lipstick becomes a practical and instant symbol of this conformity. Research by Rahmawati shows that 78% of women feel more confident about appearing in public after using lipstick, especially bright colors [7].

Psychologically, lipstick is often associated with body image and self-acceptance. Nurjanah & Tama found that cosmetics enhance self-perception by increasing control over appearance [8]. In Indonesia's patriarchal society, cosmetics help women assert empowered, independent identities [9].

Several studies have highlighted the relationship between cosmetics and self-confidence [10]. Research by Antoniadou et al. showed that women who regularly use cosmetics tend to have higher self-confidence scores [9]. Meanwhile, research by Rahmawati in Jakarta revealed that wearing red lipstick significantly increases self-confidence in professional contexts [7].

However, most of these studies were conducted in Western countries or focused solely on quantitative aspects, leaving a gap in understanding the symbolic and emotional perceptions of lipstick among Indonesian women in their daily lives. Few have qualitatively examined these perceptions [11].

This research is crucial to understanding how lipstick, as a prominent beauty product, strongly influences women's psychological well-being by shaping their self-confidence on emotional, social, and symbolic levels. The study adds depth to the psychology and sociology of beauty, offering insights that could inform more effective, inclusive self-empowerment campaigns [12]. Therefore, the primary aim is to analyze the extent to which the use of lipstick impacts women's self-confidence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-confidence is influenced by body image and self-perception of physical appearance. Lipstick, as a cosmetic product, influences these perceptions because it creates a sense of control and satisfaction with one's appearance [13]. Cosmetic use has a profound psychological effect on fostering feelings of self-worth and confidence. Experimental research based on previous studies found that female participants who used lipstick experienced improved performance in public tasks because they felt more attractive [14].

In Indonesia, a study by Yunaefa and Sabardini concluded that lipstick is the most widely used product due to its practicality and immediate effect on facial appearance [15]. Meanwhile, research by Nagae et al. found a correlation between the frequency of lipstick use and levels of self-confidence in daily activities, particularly among women aged 18–35 [16].

However, feminist perspectives, such as those proposed by Bordo, caution that cosmetic use can also be a form of imposed social pressure [17]. Women often feel compelled to always appear "perfect" in order to meet public aesthetic expectations. The discourse on lipstick and self-confidence cannot be separated from the relationship between women's agency and sociocultural pressures.

Beauty education at the vocational high school level emphasizes the importance of mastering basic competencies, encompassing not only knowledge but also practical skills related to self-care and beauty [18,19]. Beauty basics teach students about the fundamentals of hygiene, skin health, and makeup, including the use of cosmetics like lipstick, as an integral part of the self-development and self-confidence process.

Lipstick is presented as one of the main cosmetics in the basic makeup module taught to beauty students. Lipstick not only serves to add color to the lips but can also influence a person's expression and self-confidence through makeup supplies that are easily accessible and applicable to women of all ages.

Teachers and students at vocational high schools (SMK/MAK) are taught the correct techniques for applying lipstick, from selecting colors that suit a character or occasion, to applying them for maximum effect. This learning process hones creativity and fosters self-confidence in students, as they feel empowered to present their best selves through makeup that meets professional standards.

Beauty basics also emphasize that cosmetics, including lipstick, play a social and psychological role in women's daily lives. Makeup is considered a medium for expressing identity, increasing self-confidence, and strengthening self-acceptance when interacting in social and professional settings.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological orientation. Researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 15 women aged 18-20 who actively use lipstick in their daily lives. Participants came from various social and professional backgrounds in the city of Yogyakarta. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, behavioral observations during public activities (such as presentations or social gatherings), and social media documentation. Data analysis was conducted using reduction, categorization, and thematic meaning drawing techniques based on Creswell's approach [20].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on interviews, most participants identified lipstick as crucial in developing self-confidence, demonstrating its impact as both a personal and social tool and underscoring its deeper psychological necessity. First, lipstick is a symbol of personal power. Many participants referred to lipstick as “armor” or “weapon” that empowers them before appearing in public. As Safitri and Rini, a lawyer, expressed: “If you haven't put on lipstick, it feels like you're not ready for war [21].

Red lips are a kind of signal to yourself: you can do it.” This idea reflects how cosmetics play a psychological role in shaping self-identity, as previously shown by Syahida [22]. Transitioning to the next theme, participants also discussed the social dimensions of wearing lipstick.

Second, lipstick as a social tool. Lipstick not only boosts personal self-confidence but also influences how others treat you. Rina (25), a teacher, said that she feels more respected by her colleagues and students when she wears lipstick. This aligns with research by Sarpila, Koivula, and Kukkonen that found that physical appearance influences social acceptance in the workplace [23].

Third, lipstick emerged as a psychological need for some participants. They expressed feeling incomplete or anxious if they left the house without lipstick. This illustrates how lipstick has become a coping mechanism for social pressure and performative anxiety. According to Nabila et al., cosmetics can be a form of psychological ritual that helps women prepare for the outside world [24]. These interconnected themes demonstrate lipstick's multifaceted role in women's lives.

However, participants also expressed ambivalence, noting their self-confidence is influenced by external aesthetic standards rather than purely internal assurance. For instance, Siti (30), a lecturer, said: "I realize this isn't true self-confidence. But it's hard to let go. It feels strange without lipstick." This complexity highlights that while lipstick can strengthen self-confidence, it can also create a dependence on visual symbols for psychological assurance [25].

This increase in self-confidence is explained by several factors. First, lipstick has a direct aesthetic effect on facial appearance, making individuals feel more attractive, fresh, and ready to face the social environment. Second, psychologically, lipstick acts as a marker of control over appearance and a symbol of positive self-expression, making women feel more confident when interacting and speaking in public.

Sociologically, lipstick can even serve as a symbol of status and self-acceptance, helping women feel more confident in various daily activities. The use of lipstick has a significant impact on enhancing women's self-confidence, particularly in social interactions and daily activities. Lipstick, as a cosmetic product, has a strong aesthetic function, so when used, women feel more attractive and fresh in their appearance. This directly enhances positive self-perception, which in turn impacts self-confidence.

Psychologically, wearing lipstick can provide a sense of control and self-empowerment, both of which are important in the process of building a positive self-image. Applying lipstick becomes a personal ritual that gives women time to mentally prepare themselves for social challenges. This ritual facilitates the transition from a state of low confidence to one of readiness for social interaction.

Psychological studies indicate that the color and texture of lipstick can enhance personality and self-expression. Choosing a suitable color can foster comfort and optimism. Thus, lipstick not only beautifies but also serves as a nonverbal affirmation of identity and

confidence. Research shows that lipstick can help conceal perceived flaws, thereby reducing feelings of inferiority and insecurity. This camouflage is psychologically important, helping transform negative self-perceptions into positive self-esteem.

Women who wear lipstick tend to receive more positive responses from those around them. This can enhance social interactions and strengthen feelings of acceptance and appreciation, which in turn boost overall self-confidence. Lipstick serves as both a beauty product and a social tool, strengthening interpersonal relationships. Internal factors such as personality, mindset, and social experiences also contribute to the success of beauty products in influencing.

Research shows that women who wear lipstick tend to have higher self-confidence than those who don't. Lipstick is believed to conceal physical imperfections and help a person feel more beautiful, well-groomed, and prepared for daily activities, including social interactions and public speaking.

The psychological effects of lipstick use can include a more positive self-perception, an increased sense of control over one's appearance, and encouragement to express one's personality through the color chosen. The "lipstick effect" phenomenon also demonstrates that, even in difficult or stressful times, women continue to prioritize purchasing lipstick as a form of self-empowerment and a means to maintain a positive outlook.

Women's self-confidence is not solely influenced by the use of lipstick; it is also shaped by personal, social, and environmental factors, including personality and the support they receive. Lipstick can be a simple strategy to boost self-confidence, but internal strengthening and complete self-acceptance remain crucial for building sustainable self-confidence.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lipstick use has a positive influence on women's self-confidence, both personally and socially. It serves as a beauty tool and as a symbol of strength, mental readiness, and social acceptance. Yet, the self-confidence it fosters is often conditional and shaped by sociocultural expectations.

This study recommends more inclusive and empowering beauty education. Beauty campaigns should address appearance, self-acceptance, mental health, and authentic identity.

Psychology and education professionals should develop programs to enhance women's self-confidence, without relying solely on visual symbols.

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