Interdisciplinary Social Studies

WOMEN IN THE SHADOW OF SELF RACISM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF WOMEN USING INSTAGRAM

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PAPER INFO		ABSTRACT
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Approved: 2022	*July*	**Aim:** In this research, it will be proven that women Instagram users will be trapped in what is called self-racism, a situation that always makes someone dislike themselves so much and try to be someone they idolize on Instagram.
		Method: This research was conducted on 4 female informants who are different in terms of ethnicity, these ethnicities include Arab, Batak, Chinese and Papuan ethnicities and these ethnicities can be regarded as a large ethnicity in Indonesia. This research was also carried out using qualitative research methods with a phenomenological approach and also using analytical theory from Jean Paul Baudrillard.
		Findings: Women who use Instagram will be racist to themselves by dressing in style, applying makeup in a similar way, and even altering their bodies to make them thinner in order to resemble their idols on social media.
KEYWORDS		*women, racism, self, self racism, Simulacra*

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization that occurs throughout the country at this time presents many modern technologies, including mobile phones and applications in which we can communicate with other users without any restrictions on place and time (Angraeni et al., 2016). One such application is Instagram, where many of its users around the world share their daily photos, videos, and stories with other users who have similar applications. On Instagram too, users can communicate with each other through the Direct Message feature.

On Instagram, every day, millions of content have the potential to transmit physical inequalities (Althoff et al., 2017). In a sense, racism permeates these contents without anyone realizing it. Racism between whites and other people of color persists, but with a new face and tends to be well received by society (Carney, 2016).

Steinsbekk et al (2021) revealed in their research on the impact of social media use on the self-esteem of children's to adolescent appearance, in the use of self-oriented social media can increase self-esteem in appearance for two reasons: (1) Online self-presentation is often the "Best version of oneself" so that when they can express their version of their ideal, they can integrate themselves to the maximum; and (2) When someone posts their content, most of them will generate positive feedback and can potentially increase their self-esteem. They also often evaluate the ideal self of others, which is what can lead them to social comparisons that negatively affect their self-esteem. In another phenomenon, social media also raises a lot of

concern about the impact on the mental health of its users, especially on life satisfaction factors and depressive symptoms (Boer et al., 2021).

In society out, women who have black skin tend to receive worse treatment compared to white women (Nadhifah et al., 2017). Because of this, people of color sometimes adopt and accept supremacy towards whites thus causing self-indulgence and even hatred of their respective races (Nama, 2021). This kind of racism is often referred to as internalized racism (Nittle, 2021). Through social media, especially Instagram, now racism seems to change its form and is not only a problem between groups but conflicts between individuals and even individuals and themselves. With the presence of Instagram, racism has become lasting in society by prioritizing physical standards that are considered ideal and majestic, so that many users strive to be equal following beauty standards campaigned globally through actors who are commonly referred to as Influencers and there is even a more specific term, namely beauty influencer.

These standards are massively produced by the market and hype society at all levels that the perfect physical form and life is what we are now or have watched on our respective social media. Those standards are also what make it easy for modern humans to be unconfident. Perhaps some people realize that the perfect life that people display on social media is not always entirely true and the doubtful truth will pose a threat to its users (Mustofa, 2019). Social media, one of which is Instagram, always spreads discourse that is accepted by the subconscious of its users, so that it can influence habits in behavior (Bastick, 2021). Through social media too, people will be freer in expression compared to the real world where in the situation, people will be trapped in what is called Hyperreality or unconsciousness to distinguish between reality and fantasy, so that truth and lies become vague, difficult to distinguish (Damayanti & Hidayat, 2019).

Instagram users generally view influencers as attractive, authentic and the same person as them (Pradita & Kristanty, 2018). The perception of influencers by their followers becomes a very effective message in terms of creating the desired brand impact (Riama, 2021). In marketing a product, influencers involve themselves in increasing the trust and connections that have been built by them and their followers to expand their reach and impact on social media (Leite & Baptista, 2021). In this case, the role of influencers is very important to everything in the society of Instagram users, especially women. Instagram social media influencers, managed to become the new opinion leader who controls an important role in influencing their followers. The circumstances built by an influencer have created a trusting nature for his followers, not least in the spread of advertising and consumptive shopping habits (Croes & Bartels, 2021). Instagram as a social media will eventually become a dynamic arena to compete for positions and legitimacy, one of which is that the practice of making up will be a strategy in winning the competition. For worse, unintentionally, this phenomenon might create what society calls as "Self-racism."

"Self-racism" is a concept based on the word "Self" and the word "Racism" that can be interpreted as racist. Self Racism is a condition in which someone tends to hate themselves because of their inability to be or look like those who fit the beauty standards in society (Bauman, 2020), either because they are naturally beautiful or because being made up by the products campaigned on has made them more attractive (Fardouly & Rapee, 2019). The term

"Beauty Privilege" gradually developed after people realized that anyone who has an attractive, beautiful, and enchanting appearance will benefit more in society.

Racism is not a new thing, not even in this globalization era. Researchers around the world have studied it continuously and discovered that it happens in various circumstance. Some examples like research conducted by Chambers et al. (2020) studying about how racism affects black women and that of Cheng (2022) which explores how Asian-American women deal with racism in their life prove that racism is a serious problem.

However, people barely find research discussing about self-racism that might happen because of the so-called standards, an impact of the previously mentioned racism cases. This issue might be the key to people's, especially women, reason of being consumptive when it comes to beauty products. The apparent capitalism can be spread through social media, including Instagram.

In this case, capitalism through Instagram social media, again finding other ways to be manifested into people's lives, can again invite people to be consumptive about things that are difficult to achieve. It is no secret, that the entertainment industry always uses women's bodies to make profits. In other words, women's bodies are considered money printing machines, therefore they need women's bodies as assets in many advertisements, including advertisements for beauty products.

To study or deepen the study of consumptiveness, of course, the closest theory is Jean-Paul Baudrillard's thoughts on Hyperreality from the theory of Culture. Knowing Baudrillard and all the results of his thinking, it is known that Hyperreality is a state in which the real fact or state has been disguised by pseudo-reality or imagery. Even if the image can be more believable compared to the facts, the original reality disappeared and was replaced by pseudo-reality. The important point of Hyperreality is that to achieve this, the community will go through Simulacra and simulation first (Hidayat, 2012).

Piliang in Hidayat's writing (2012), explained that Simulacra are a space of reality, in it contains the process of duplicating and recycling different fragments of life, namely in the form of commodity images, facts, signs, and codes that cross each other in one dimension of the same space and time. It is these simulacra that will be faced with a consumption society, where all its economic things are no longer based on use value and switch to favoring the value of signs.

After being faced with Simulacra, the consumption society will be placed on a concept called Baudrillard with Simulation where everything is always determined by relationships and signs. In the simulation, a person's identity is no longer determined by and from within him. Identity will be more determined by the construction of signs, images, and codes that form a mirror of how individuals understand themselves and their relationship with society (Hidayat, 2012). In this study, the simulation will illustrate the efforts of female Instagram users in realizing their ideal life to be equal based on physical characteristics with people they think are beautiful. At this stage, the women who use Instagram have been able to show self-racism actions by always following the signs, imagery, and codes obtained through activities using Instagram that create trends.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative methods with a phenomenological approach. This study will collect and examine a phenomenon regarding women and self-racism with all forms of visible symptoms. The phenomenological approach that is part of the quality method is always closely related to the form of elements that exist in society, especially in the field of culture and interpretative studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research can also encourage researchers to conduct thematic analysis and of course engage interactively in the reality being studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The researcher also focused the subject of his research on women who have different ethnicities, so that readers will feel the angle of similarity between one ethnicity and another ethnicity in terms of self-racism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profiles of Informants from Several Ethnic Groups in Indonesia

The research was conducted by several female informants from the four major ethnicities in Indonesia, with an age range of 23 to 25 years. The ethnicity in question is from Arab, Batak, Chinese, and Papuan ethnicities where these ethnicities are most vulnerable to experiencing acts of racism in the community.

No.	Informant's Name (Initials)	Age	Ethnic Group	Instagram Usage	Mentions of Informants in Research
1	H	23 Years	Arab	7 Years	Report A
2	A S	23 Years	Batak	8 Years	Report B
3	V F	24 Years	Chinese	8 Years	Report C
4	J S	25 Years	Papua	6 Years	Report D

Report A

The first informant is named Halimatusa'diah and in this research will be referred to as Informant A. Informant A is 23 years old and is a descendant of ethnic Arabs who was born and grew up in Indonesia. According to him, the physical characteristics of the Arab ethnicity are that they have a high nose, larger eyes, a larger posture than other ethnicities, and eyebrows that are usually thick. According to informant A, Instagram is a social media that is currently very loved by teenagers in Indonesia and that is the reason Informant A uses Instagram now. As for beauty influencers, informant A argues that a beauty influencer is someone who is engaged in the field of beauty, or according to her, it is also commonly referred to as a *Selebgram* (Instagram Celebrity) who always contains beauty content on Instagram social media.

Report B

The second informant is named Anggi Siregar, who in this research will be referred to as informant B. Informant B has an age of 23 years and is of Batak ethnicity. Informant B had lived in Serang City, one of the cities in Banten province to receive higher education for five years. According to him, the Batak ethnicity has general physical characteristics, namely a firm

facial line and gives a fierce impression to other ethnicities who see it, has *kuning langsat* and *sawo matang* skin. In addition to being physical, he also mentioned that ethnic Batak can always be identified with the characteristics of a voice that sounds louder than others. Informant B has the notion that Instagram is a place for many people to show their best side in cyberspace. As for the opinion about Beauty Influencers, informant B is of the view that a beauty influencer is a celebrity on Instagram.

Report C

The third Informant is named Vivi Fransiska who will be called Informant C in this study. Informant C is 24 years old and is an Indonesian of Chinese descent from Borneo. Informant C described that the physical characteristics that can present Chinese ethnicity as large have a pale white skin color and narrow eyes as many ordinary people know. Informant J has been an Instagram social media user for approximately eight years and he also interprets Instagram as a social media to share photos and videos with his followers. Meanwhile, a beauty influencer is defined as someone active on social media, actively reviews beauty products, and has a performance in the field of beauty.

Report D

The fourth Informant named Jagareka Diana Siep, who will then be referred to in this study as Informant D. Informant D is 25 years old and is a native descendant of Papua, to be precise, the Dani Tribe. According to him, the physical characteristics that can be seen in the Papuan people are the same as other ethnicities, but what makes it a little different is the slightly darker skin color and the hair that is more curled or even curly. Informant D considers Instagram as an application that can make photos look better with the edit feature provided in the application. Informant D reasoned that creating an Instagram account was a communication tool with a wider reach when all his friends had Instagram accounts. While interpreting Beauty Influencer, informant D gave the view that a beauty influencer is someone who offers beauty products, both through uploading photos, and videos and imitating messages on Instagram user accounts which he thinks can be the target market.

Simulacra: Reduplication and Recycling

Previously, the above has been explained about simulacra, which according to Baudrillard is a space of reality that contains the process of duplication and recycling of various fragments of a different life, namely in the form of commodity images, facts, signs, and codes that overlap each other but remain in one dimension of the same time and space (Hidayat, 2012). This is where women Instagram users will be faced as a consumption society, where all economic things are no longer based on use value, but will turn into significant value. In this case, simulacra refer to the female activity of Instagram users in searching and consuming everything about the perfect standard of physical characteristics through content uploaded by beauty influencers.

Female Instagram users, will try or try as much as possible so that they can be the same as the beauty influencers she admires physically. They will rule out which items need to be purchased based on use value to follow the fashion or trend that most people are following. The women Instagram users will feel that they are getting "equality" when they successfully

follow the dress mode or make-up trend that is very massively campaigned by beauty influencers.

"Yang aku suka looknya itu, menurut aku Pau Pau atau Magdalena orang Lastday Production. Itu aku suka ngikutin, ya walaupun gak yang sering-sering banget, soalnya dia juga bukan orang yang suka tutorial, tapi dia jualan produk kolagen untuk kecantikan gitu, Namanya Byotee. Itu aku ngikutin. Terus di TikTok sih aku ngikutin untuk tutorial, kaya Laura Sibudian, nah itu aku ngikutin sih. Karena dia suka try-on gitu ya make-upnya, kita jadi tau kan sebelum kita beli nih, gimana kalau di muka, ini coverage apa enggak, ini jadi dempul atau enggak, Sukanya begitu. Terus kalau di Instagram lagi ada Acha Sinaga, aku suka dia mix and match outfit, lucu-lucu aja sih, walaupun aku tau kayaknya gak cocok dipake di badanku gitu." (Results of an interview with Informant C, June 4, 2022).

Translate: *"What I like is the look, I think Pau Pau or Magdalena from the Lastday Production person. I'm always updated when it comes to her even though it's not that often because she is not really a person who do tutorials, but she sells collagen products for beauty, Byotee. That's what I know the most. Then on TikTok, I followed tutorial accounts, like Laura Sibudian, I also follow that one. Because she likes to try-on the make-up, to collect some information before we buy it, how it will look on our face, whether it covers our face well, whether it is too thick; that's what I'd like to know. Then on Instagram, there is Acha Sinaga. I like her mixing and matching outfits and that's cute though I know that it might not suit me."*

In informant C's statement above, she said that she likes and follows several beauty influencers on Instagram social media, she also knows well the products recommended by beauty influencers on her social media. This statement proves that make-up and the trend of looking as if they are basic needs for him, in addition to clothing, food, and boards. That's all she did to get legitimacy and attention from the community to look equal and meet the standards of beauty that are stigmatized in the society around her. This discussion was also supported by a statement from informant D, he followed the dress mode of the friends around him.

"Di kalangan saya sendiri, kalo make-up jarang ya, tapi untuk pakaian banyak. Saya ikuti dari teman, tapi di modifikasi lagi sesuai dengan isi kepala saya, soalnya saya lihat mereka keren, tapi tidak di saya. Awalnya saya merasa tidak nyaman, karena itu baru bagi saya. Tapi lama kelamaan, perasaan itu berubah" (Processed from the results of an interview with Informant D, May 29, 2022).

Translate: *"In my circle, it's rare for us to put on make-up but for clothes, there are a lot of them. I follow a friend in this case, but I will modify it according to my thoughts because I see that it fits them well but not me. At first, I felt uncomfortable, because it was new to me. But over time, those feelings change."*

Indirectly, Instagram airs a lot of content that contains certain physical or racial characteristics so that it can create standardization, that many physical characteristics become Instagram's "demand" as if it has been determined. In hyperreality societies, simulacra are defined as a fractal code and order. We must realize that code can be incarnated as a control tool for an object and an individual in society. In this study, the code leads to a "beautiful code"

where the code controls objects that we can call beauty products and individuals as beauty influencer followers on Instagram are conditions for their existence in the middle of society. With the "beautiful code", women Instagram users can be encouraged to follow every beauty influencer's words, especially following recommendations, tips, or just by showing their daily lives so that followers will admiration.

Simulacra on Instagram social media succeeded in showing the ideal life of a beauty influencer who looks attractive according to the established beauty standards. With the "beautiful" code they built, the code acts as an individual control tool, namely their followers in the community. This means that for anyone who does not have a "beautiful" code, its existence cannot be taken into account.

Representation of Simulated World

Baudrillard said that western culture is a representation of the simulated world. It can be said that the world formed from the bonds of various signs and codes irregularly without clear references and relations. This relationship involves real signs (facts) formed through production and also pseudo-signs (images) which are also formed through the process of reproduction (Hidayat, 2012). The simulation culture includes both signs, then they accumulate and intertwine and become a whole. Under these circumstances, we cannot realize which ones are real, or fake and which are pseudo. All are mixed up as part of the reality lived by society.

The presence of social media also presents various components in the world. Simulacra is very easily accessible to all circles around the world. Similarly, when people like beauty influencers are present to give a perfect picture of life, a beautiful face, and offer physical characteristics that are trending for their followers on Instagram, without any clear references, regardless of the diversity that exists and produces simulations with uniform shapes and looks.

"Kalo saya dari dulu tuh suka tren make-up Korea, karena kalo make-up ngikutin orang Arab lagi itu kaya keliatan menor, banyak yang komen. Tapi meskipun udah ngikutin make-up korea, tetep aja sih keliatan menor." (Processed from the results of an interview with Informant A, May 30, 2022).

Translate: *"If I have always liked the Korean make-up trend because if I follow the Arab style again, it is too much, many people comment on it. Even though you have followed Korean make-up, it's still too much sometimes."*

From this statement, Informant A described that he always strives to be uniform with the influencers he follows on Instagram. He also mentioned that no matter how hard he tries to look like the Korean Make-up trend, the effort will still disappoint him. The statement of informant A seems to be supported by the statement of informant C but in a different form of delivery.

"Karena menurutku itu bagian dari selfcare ya, karena kita pakai skincare, itu bukan hanya karena biar glowing tapi ya karena kita merawat, karena apaya, muka kita juga burik gitu kan. Bukan karena gak sedap dipandang, sebenarnya menurutku Wanita itu menggunakan make up, menggunakan skincare, itu pertama untuk dirinya sendiri sih, bukan untuk orang lain, karena contoh yang nyata banget nih, yang real, pas pandemic deh, kita tuh bisa aja make

up yang full make up tapi kita tuh pake masker. Kenapa sih lu gak make up aja di atasnya doang, pake alis, pake eye shadow, tapi nggak kan, karena itu semua for us, nggak yang buat orang lain, buat orang lain ya urusan nanti. Sebenernya waktu kita pakai make up, skin care, outfit terbaik, itu untuk diri kita, bagian dari selfcare tadi. Hal itu digandrungi karena bagian dari menjaga diri sih." (Processed from the results of an interview with Informant C, June 4, 2022).

Translate: "*Because I think it's part of self-care because we use skincare, it's not just because we want to look "glowing" but because we take care of ourselves, because our face is kind of bad. It's not because it's ugly, it's just I think women wear makeup, use skincare, it's first for herself, not for others, because the a real example is when the pandemic is, we can just put on full makeup but we don't use masks. Why don't you just put on makeup, use eyebrows, use eye shadow, but you don't, right, because it's all for us, not for others. While for others, it's doesn't really matter. When we wear makeup, skincare, or the best outfit, it's for ourselves, part of the self-care. It's loved because it's part of taking care of yourself.* "

Informant C reasoned that he had to follow the trend to be able to look attractive in front of those around him. It is undeniable, that the reason a person follows the trend as a medium to look good is for himself. In this way, they will be better prepared to be in the middle of society. To follow a trend, not infrequently someone has to be sacrificed to have a little resemblance or similarity with the beauty influencer they follow on Instagram. The sacrifices were made in the hope that the simulations they carried out would bear fruit.

"Ada, jelas ada. Kalo kita lihat kan, postur badan mereka lebih bagus ya. Jadi saya sekarang jaga pola makan, sama kalo milih baju itu yang gak terlalu longgar dan gak terlalu jadul." (Processed from an interview with Informant B, May 28, 2022).

Translate: "*Yes, obviously yes. If we really pay attention to it, their posture is better. So I now maintain a diet, also when choosing clothes that are not too loose and not too old school.*"

In this study, it was revealed that without them realizing it, informants tend to first admire and look for similarities between themselves and the beauty influencers they follow on Instagram to look equal. They feel that the distance between themselves and beauty influencers makes sense to achieve and it is easier to realize a life that is considered perfect by just looking at or following the content that beauty influencer airs on Instagram. Here it can be seen that the reality lived by the informants can no longer be distinguished between which self is real or fact and which self is an image (pseudo). All of that is what causes self-racism to occur, there is a tendency to not be able to accept oneself physically due to the desire to be equal to the people they admire.

CONCLUSION

What is depicted in this study is to prove that women Instagram users, with all their behavior on social media make them a consumptive society as described by Jean-Paul Baudrillard in his cultural theory. The author concludes, with the analysis that has been done, that women Instagram users will tend not to be self-conscious, hate themselves, and not accept what is physically wrong with them. In a sense, female Instagram users will be racist to

themselves by tending to imitate their idols on social media, such as dressing in fashion, doing similar make-up, and even remodeling their bodies to make them slimmer so that they can be similar to her idol.

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