

Beauty And The Beast (Perception Of The Phenomenon Of Beauty Privilege)

Dyah Rachman Kuswartanti¹, Cahyaning Widhyastuti², Nunu Ramadhan³
Universitas Informatika dan Bisnis Indonesia, Indonesia ^{1,2,3}

Correspondent: dyahrachman@unibi.ac.id ¹

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ABSTRACT: The phenomenon of beauty privilege where those who have beautiful faces tend to get special privileges compared to people who have ordinary faces or are even considered ugly. Beauty privilege usually provides convenience in various areas of life, such as friendship, work, and people's trust. The development of beauty privilege in society causes inequality, and so many people are affected by this phenomenon. People look more at the physical, especially an attractive physical form. Those with a beautiful physique are considered more positive, but less attractive people will be labelled worse. This study aims to determine the perception of beauty privilege in emerging adulthood. The respondents in this study amounted to 261 respondents. Data collection using a beauty privilege perception questionnaire consisting of 14 items with a validity value of 0.345-0.704 and a reliability value of 0.859. The sampling technique used is non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling type. The results of this study showed that 51.87% of respondents had a negative perception of beauty privilege, meaning that individuals think that beauty privilege is not the main thing for achieving something; individuals believe more in their abilities and inner beauty. However, the other 48.3% had a positive perception of beauty privilege, meaning that they admit that it exists around them.

Keywords: Perception, Beauty Privilege, Emerging Adulthood



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INTRODUCTION

Beauty standards change over the years and depend on the country's culture. Beauty standards often change over time and can vary between cultures. In Indonesia itself, one of the most popular cultures is South Korean culture (Arsitowati, 2018). The Korean Invasion or Korean Wave has a considerable influence on beauty standards in Indonesia, not only from dramas and K-pop but also the entry of facial and skin care products is one of the factors. Korean women or men who have white skin, a sharp nose, a thin face, slightly slanted eyes, and black hair are the

Requirements for beauty or good looks in Korea (Rahayu, 2021). Women are said to have beauty not only based on a face that is identical to skin that looks white, smooth, and firm but also on the shape of the body that has curves following established standards such as the hips, lips, and certain other organs (Saputra & dkk, 2018).

Society tends to give privileges to beautiful people so they usually get a lot of convenience in all aspects, called Beauty Privilege. Sumayyah (2021) explains that beauty privilege is a term for someone born charming who will be considered to have a luckier and smoother life than others (Sumayyah, 2021). Beauty privilege is obtained because those with a beautiful physical appearance, whereas beautiful people will have the advantage of being given many opportunities that are not owned by people with standard physiques (Marella, 2021). This concept has been around for a long time; even as babies, people have been judged physically. Babies who look beautiful or handsome, cute and adorable, will get special treatment.

Freud and the psychoanalysts recognised the importance of the sense of beauty, which can be seen in beauty. I propose the following definition: “Beauty is an aspect of the experience of idealisation in which an object(s), sound(s) or concept(s) is believed to possess qualities of formal perfection”. The sense of beauty evoked by physical beauty is pleasing to the beholder. It can influence the state of being from a sense of excitement of attraction to a diversity of passionate attraction (Hagman, 2002). Physical attractiveness strongly influences how people are treated and perceived. In a meta-analysis of 919 studies addressing the benefits of physical attractiveness, Langlois et al. (2000) found that attractiveness privileges occur for both men and women, children and adults, and with strangers and people we know personally (Langlois, n.d.). The benefits of attractiveness are also wide-ranging. Attractiveness influences judgements of academic ability (Langlois et al., 2000), employability (Dion et al., 1972), and social skills (Dion et al., 1972; Eagly et al., 1991).

Privileging someone with an attractive appearance, whether in the field of career, business, job search for a partner or even things that make life easier, is a common thing; some agree with it, but some feel that giving this privilege is unfair (Amalia et al., 2021). The concept of beauty privilege is a form of discrimination for some women at large; feminist experts state that ‘beauty’ can indirectly become a tool of discrimination regarding ‘ugly’ women as a ‘lookism’ so that expectations of beauty standards are getting stronger (Pratiwi, 2018). Miralles et al. (2020) said that the emergence of Barbie dolls, described as having too ideal visualisations, made more than half of their respondents feel insecure (Miralles et al., 2020). This condition will cause problems in social life that stem from the physical condition of the individual (Rohanah et al., 2022).

Few people develop thoughts in assessing someone from the physical instead of seeing their personality (Maretiana, 2022). The stereotype that develops in society is that someone who has a beautiful and handsome face must also have a good personality (Ausiani, 2022). This kind of thinking and habit can lead to discrimination in treating people who are considered less attractive, strange and less in line with the physical standards of society (Haryadi, 2021). People compare other people's appearance with the standard of physical beauty, which may lead to an obsession with physical appearance.

On the other hand, someone who has an attractive appearance does not always benefit. They can also experience bad things, such as hostility from others because of their appearance (Marson & Hessmiller, 2016). In addition, attractive women are sometimes also treated negatively because of their appearance (Agthe et al., 2013). They are also often teased by others or receive inappropriate treatment. Women's bodies tend to internalise the views of others and thus evaluate their physical selves because 'women's bodies are seen, evaluated, and always potentially objectified' (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Beauty privilege is not just a privilege that is earned, but it has to face the nightmare of gender violence. In addition, an attractive appearance can trigger jealousy and conflict in the neighbourhood. Many beautiful women have received violent treatment, such as being doused with chemicals, bullied by friends and even killed by someone as a result of jealousy or envy of people around them (Novita, 2018).

As reported through the Mental Health Foundation website (2022), in childhood and adolescence, increased body dissatisfaction in adulthood has been associated with an increased likelihood of depressive symptoms, psychological distress, and eating disorders. Concerns about appearance can also negatively impact participation in the workplace, with one survey finding that 17% of women said they would not go to a job interview, and 8% would avoid going to work if they felt bad about their appearance (Body Image in Adulthood, 2022). Physical appearance has always been a central domain for determining how socially attractive one is to others (Duarte et al., 2014). Individuals indirectly compete to appear attractive (Putri et al., 2020). Because an attractive physical appearance makes a person feel more valuable.

METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach. Quantitative research uses statistical analysis methods collected through measurement and emphasises the results and data analysis in numbers (Azwar, 2011). The type of research used in this study is descriptive research. Azwar (2011) said that descriptive research is research that conducts analysis only to the level of description, which is limited to a factual description of the data. The data is processed and presented briefly and systematically so that it is easy to read, understand and conclude. This study aims to see an overview of the perception of beauty privilege among respondents in the emerging adulthood phase aged 18-25 years. The sample in this study totalled 261 respondents (see table 1).

Table 1. Description of Research Respondents

	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	51	19.5%
	Women	210	80.5%
	Total	261	100%
Status	Work	80	30.7%
	Not Work	41	15.7%
	Student	140	53.6%
	Total	261	100%

Consists of the Perception of Beauty Privilege scale based on the concept of perception proposed by Baron & Byrne (2004) made by the researcher. In the scale created, researchers use cognitive, affective and conative aspects to see how a person views the phenomenon of beauty privilege. It consists of 14 items with a reliability value of 0.859 and a validation value of 0.345-0.704. This scale uses a Likert scale, consisting of 5 answer categories, namely 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree), and 5 (Strongly Agree).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Ages 18-29 are better known as emerging adulthood, where they begin to mature physically and sexually. One of the distinctive features of emerging adulthood is exploration, which impacts their lives in romance, work, and worldview (Arnett, 2007). In the 20s, marriage rates usually increase, and the early to mid-20s are a time of frequent job changes and educational pursuits. Emerging adulthood also has prominent identity issues they are sorting out, and finding the right love and job will also cause anxiety. The world of work is also often stressful and frustrating, especially for early adults with limited educational qualifications, whereas college graduates have more expectations of their jobs (Arnett, 2004; Co[^]té, n.d.; Hamilton & Hamilton, 2006). When looking for love and employment, many pay attention to their appearance. The impact of this beauty standard can also give insecure feelings to people who lack an attractive appearance, even if they get lucky.

According to Ervig Goffman (1968), stigma is any form of physical and social attributes that reduce a person's social identity, disqualifying that person from being accepted. The stigma received by those with beauty privilege is a human right. Everyone has a different perception, especially of the beauty privilege phenomenon. Internal and external factors can influence this. Internal factors include psychological needs, background, experience, personality, culture, attitudes and beliefs in general. While external factors such as intensity, size, contrast, movement and something new (Sobur, 2013). Beauty is interactive and intersubjective in the human mind (Hagman, 2022). The cognitive process is the process by which individuals give meaning by interpreting stimuli (stimuli) that arise from certain objects, people, and symbols. In other words, perception includes receiving, organising, and interpreting stimuli that have been organised to influence behaviour and form attitudes. This happens because perception involves individual interpretation of certain objects, so each object will have a different perception even though they see the same object (Gibson, 2002).

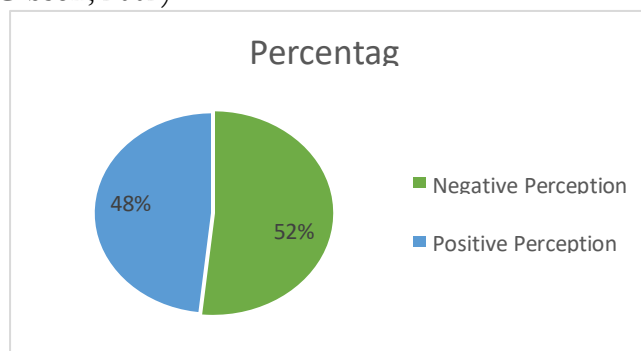


Figure 1. Results of Perceived Beauty Privilege

The results of this study found that 51.7% or 135 respondents (shown in Figure 1) had negative beauty privilege perceptions, meaning that individuals view beauty privilege as not the main thing to achieve something; individuals believe more in their abilities and inner beauty. They tend to believe in one's effort to achieve something rather than physical beauty or good looks. Beauty should not only be judged in terms of physicality but also include psychological qualities a person possesses, such as self-confidence, smiling and friendly, and good behaviour. Outer beauty without inner beauty is not enough to understand the concept of beauty (Ma, 2022). Developing personal qualities that will enhance inner beauty, such as education, insight, economic status, positive personality traits (e.g. confident, cultured and dignified), character traits and behaviour (Schmalzried & A., 2013; Zhang, 2013).

When a woman is physically beautiful but without good personal qualities, her value may diminish or become non-existent because, in Japan, many people criticise a woman's appearance rather than her inner beauty (Ma, 2022; Darling-Wolf, 2004). If their success relies solely on physical beauty, it is unstable and easily destroyed (Ma, 2022). Because physical beauty will diminish with age and tend to be easily replaced so that it becomes no longer valuable or physically attractive. In friendship, it is more important to treat others with compassion and as good friends (Schmalzried, 2013). All the qualities of inner beauty share three common attributes: nobility, compassion and skilful actions (Armstrong, 2011). Beauty with virtue brings glory to them; with these qualities, they will be more respected, appreciated and recognised. In addition, beauty can also be seen in how the person gives compassion to others. With her banting beauty, she can give space and hold others with care and consideration. Skilful action, given the situation, is also equally important in assessing beauty standards. When a person can take a patient attitude, is willing to listen to others, does not react when others speak, and sincerely responds according to their portion. A person with this trait will always carry her beauty everywhere.

Meanwhile, 48.3% or 126 respondents (shown in Figure 1) have a positive perception of beauty privilege, meaning that they believe that this privilege exists around them and believe that a person's beauty or good looks affect the results they get. They consider beauty privilege lucky for someone whose life seems smoother than most other people's with their beauty. The advantages of having beauty privilege include being more easily accepted and respecting their opinions, being the centre of attention in their group, and being praised for their performance more often.

The body becomes a commodity because the human body is easier to see than a person's character or character. The growing beauty product industry further emphasises the ideal size of beauty standards (Ade, 2017; Kartono, 2016). The existence of a 'beauty industrial complex' where countries are bombarded by the Korean beauty industry, such as cosmetic products, the concept of ideal beauty has changed and increased the industry and plastic surgery activities among women who solely want to achieve the target of being beautiful according to the standard that has been set. In China, in 2015, a marketing survey showed that more than 57% of women wear makeup daily and spend an average of 30.1 minutes applying cosmetics (Company, 2015). So many people want to present themselves as more attractive. In addition, mass media and social media also influence the construction of perceptions about beauty standards in society, especially women, and make it a social demand that seems to be achieved and fulfilled. Female celebrities are the standard of physical beauty (Zang, 2012). A face similar to a celebrity becomes a beauty standard (Ma, 2022).

The family contributes to shaping the internalisation of the concept of beauty standards, affecting the relationship between families in making physical comparisons (Buss & Stoltz, 2020). In the family environment, there are demands for the construction of beauty standards since childhood, such as children must be white and have a slim body, especially women. Forms of beauty privilege in the family include giving compliments and comparing families when one of their family members does not meet beauty standards. With beauty privilege, they are required to be perfect. This makes them pay more attention to their body shape and compare their bodies with other people who consider them more beautiful than others. They will undergo body treatments to improve their body shape and be more appreciated.

Physical attractiveness is an easy way to gain power, academic judgement, and workability, as well as attract attention from others to get a date and interact socially (Weitz, 2001; Yonce, 2014). An attractive appearance is considered an asset in supporting a career (Ardhilarisa, 2021).

Employees who have physical attractiveness tend to be more favoured. The social or professional environment shows that physical appearance affects social life; someone who is more charming is often treated much better in their social scope (Langlois et al., 2000), such as being more popular, being judged better, getting higher job recognition, and good career advancement (Bila, 2022).

In the educational environment, beauty privilege is carried out by education personnel, both teachers and lecturers, who behave differently towards students, such as providing special facilities and task waivers, such as voluntary rankings, to students who are considered beautiful. It was found that most people who look charming tend to have more achievements than ordinary students. Therefore, most educators included in this research are kinder and have higher expectations for students who are considered attractive (Amalaa, 2022).

This beauty privilege gives attractive people increased self-confidence, extraversion, and higher self-esteem. Even when those with this attractiveness make mistakes, they are more likely to be forgiven, tolerated and forgotten by society. In the case of others who do not fulfil beauty standards, bullying and neglect occur. In the friendship environment, the concept of beauty privilege also appears, such as the invitation to join a circle of friends in which several people are considered to fulfil beauty standards. Individuals who do not meet beauty standards usually get body shaming. The construction of beauty standards drives the problem of body shaming, which individuals often experience by unconsciously commenting on someone's physical form (Ramahardhila & Supriyono, 2022). Many women do not fulfil the beauty standards applied in Indonesian society, which causes negative connotations for women. Women who are labelled as not beautiful often feel insecure and may even develop depression (Amalaa, 2022). Many people experience oppression due to issues of difference and depending on their perceptions (Canfield, 2002). Many people end up comparing themselves to others, 'The neighbour's grass is greener than our own', to the point of trying to look within themselves to make improvements. Oppression within the social construct of society can occur due to the actions and words of others (Canfield, 2002). Because of this beauty privilege phenomenon, it can lead to insecurity, eating disorders that affect their mental health, and dissatisfaction with the body. It will have an impact on social relationships with their surroundings.

CONCLUSION

From this study, it can be concluded that 51.7% of respondents have a negative perception of beauty privilege, meaning that individuals think that beauty privilege is not the main thing to achieve something. Individuals believe more in their abilities and inner beauty. Meanwhile, the other 48.3% have a positive perception of beauty privilege, where they recognise that this beauty privilege exists around them and believe that it makes their lives easier. However, it cannot be denied that beauty can be seen from outside and inside a person. External and internal beauty will complete one's beauty standards. People can judge good and bad not only from appearance but from a person's quality.

For future studies that want to research beauty privilege, it is better to use qualitative research methods to get in-depth data on the perspectives of other people regarding beauty privilege and people who get beauty privilege themselves and add views on inner beauty as a standard of beauty. In addition, this data can more broadly know the advantages and disadvantages of an attractive physical appearance. Many studies are related to body image, but qualitative research regarding the perception of beauty privilege is still lacking so further research can add other variables such as body shaming, bullying, feelings of insecurity, eating disorders, insecurity, anxiety, stress and even depression.

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