

Inferiority Complex in Adolescent Users of The Tiktok Application

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ABSTRACT

In today's digital era, the role of social media such as TikTok can influence the formation of adolescent self concepts. If it is not accompanied by a positive attitude, the various content seen can create a stimulus that forms a negative self-concept for adolescents. Inferiority complex is a condition in which individuals cannot compensate for feelings of inferiority so they tend to view their self-concepts negatively and feel powerless to face the environment. This study aims to determine the description of inferiority complex behavior in adolescent users of the TikTok application. This research is a mix method with purposive sampling technique. Quantitative data collection using an inferiority feeling scale. Qualitative data collection using interviews to 6 respondents with low, medium, and high inferiority complex categories. The results of the study describe that the inferiority complex behavior of adolescent users of the TikTok application is related to aspects of social confidence, school abilities, self-regard, physical appearance, and physical abilities. The survey results also found that 8.82% of teenagers using the TikTok application had a low level of inferiority complex; 85.30% at moderate level; and 5.88% at high levels.

Keywords: Inferiority complex, adolescent, social media, tiktok

INTRODUCTION

TikTok is one of the most popular applications in the world based on Google Play Reports from 2022 to 2023. TikTok allows users to create videos with music, filters, and other creative features. A company issued this application from China, China. ByteDance first launched an application called Douyin that had short duration. Based on data from Sensor Tower, this application was downloaded 700 million times throughout 2019.¹ This allowed TikTok to outperform some applications under the auspices of Facebook Inc. This application ranks second after Whatsapp, which has 1.5 billion downloads.² According to,⁷ what makes Tik Tok stand out among other competitors is that this entertainment application allows everyone to become creators because of its simplicity and convenience. Head of Public Policy TikTok Indonesia, Donny Eryastha, stated that TikTok users in Indonesia are dominated by teenagers aged 14-24 years or better known as gen Z or generation Z.⁹ Modern social media and entertainment expert Dr Julie Albright As reported by,¹ people who use TikTok are likened to someone who is hypnotizing himself. When we scroll through the application page, we will see photos or things that are fun and attract attention. We get that

little stimulation in the brain's pleasure center, so we want to keep scrolling it, so that it can influence a person's self-concept.⁷

The process of forming a child's self-concept is heavily influenced by social media. Social media can influence a child's self-concept in several ways. Firstly, the content they encounter may shape their perceptions of beauty, success, and societal expectations. Exposure to idealized images and lifestyles on social media can contribute to unrealistic standards, potentially impacting a child's self-esteem and self-worth. Additionally, interactions on social media, such as comments, likes, and shares, can influence how a child perceives their social standing and acceptance. Positive interactions may boost self-esteem, while negative ones could lead to feelings of inadequacy or social rejection. Moreover, social media provides a platform for social comparison, where children may measure themselves against their peers or influencers they follow. This constant comparison can affect their self-concept, fostering either a positive or negative self-image based on perceived similarities or differences. The influence of social media on a child's self-concept highlights the need for thoughtful

guidance and support from parents, caregivers, and educators. Encouraging critical thinking, promoting healthy online habits, and fostering open communication can help children navigate the complex landscape of social media and develop a positive and realistic self-concept.¹³

Where children who already have smartphones can easily create social media accounts such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and others. This widespread availability of smartphones provides children with a gateway to the digital world and the opportunity to engage with various online platforms. The mention of specific social media platforms - Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and others - indicates the diverse range of online spaces available to children. Each platform comes with its own set of features, content, and potential interactions. Facebook, for example, may offer a more extensive network for connecting with friends and family, Instagram focuses on visual content sharing, while TikTok revolves around short-form videos. The word "easily" emphasizes the simplicity of the account creation process. This ease of access can be both positive and concerning. On one hand, it allows children to stay connected with peers, express themselves, and access educational content. On the other hand, it raises concerns about the potential exposure to age-inappropriate content, privacy issues, and the risk of online interactions with strangers. Parents, guardians, and educators play crucial roles in guiding children's digital experiences. It is essential for them to be aware of the platforms children are using, set age-appropriate guidelines, and educate children about responsible online behavior, privacy settings, and the potential consequences of their digital actions.¹⁴

Social media has a big role in forming the self-concept of children and adolescents, various posts that they can see will be a stimulus to form their self-concept. Social media serves as a powerful tool for self-expression, communication, and exposure to diverse content. The platforms enable users to share their experiences, achievements, and thoughts, contributing to the construction of their digital identity. The idea that "various posts that they can see will be a stimulus to form their self-concept" suggests that the content encountered on social media serves as stimuli or triggers for the development of self-concept. The term "various posts" encompasses a wide range of content, including images, videos, text, and interactions with peers. These stimuli can have both positive and negative effects on the self-concept of children and adolescents. Positive stimuli may include affirming comments,

supportive interactions, and exposure to diverse perspectives that contribute to a well-rounded self-concept. However, negative stimuli, such as cyberbullying, unrealistic beauty standards, or social comparison, can potentially harm self-esteem and contribute to distorted self-perceptions. It is important to note that the influence of social media on self-concept is a dynamic and ongoing process. As children and adolescents engage with online content, they continuously receive input that contributes to shaping their self-identity. Parents, caregivers, and educators play crucial roles in guiding young individuals to navigate social media responsibly, encouraging critical thinking, promoting positive online interactions, and fostering a healthy self-concept in the digital age.¹⁵

If the use of social media is not accompanied by a positive self-attitude, it will be easy for teenage users to get a negative self-concept. The manner in which teenagers approach and engage with social media plays a significant role. It implies that a positive self-attitude, or a healthy and constructive view of oneself, is a protective factor when navigating the digital landscape. The statement implies that social media can contribute to the formation of a negative self-concept if users lack a positive self-attitude. Social media platforms are often filled with various content, including curated images, lifestyle comparisons, and opportunities for social validation. Without a positive self-attitude, teenagers may be more susceptible to negative influences, such as unrealistic beauty standards, cyberbullying, or social comparison, which can adversely impact their self-esteem and self-worth. The term "it will be easy for teenage users to get a negative self-concept" implies a causal relationship – the absence of a positive self-attitude makes it easier for negative self-concepts to develop. This reinforces the idea that a teenager's mindset and self-perception are crucial factors in determining the potential psychological effects of their social media use. Parents, caregivers, and educators can play a pivotal role in promoting a positive self-attitude among teenagers by fostering open communication, encouraging self-acceptance, and providing guidance on responsible social media use. The goal is to empower teenagers to navigate the digital landscape with a healthy mindset, mitigating the risk of developing a negative self-concept based on their online experiences.¹⁵ There is a mismatch between the real self and the ideal self, causing gaps. This gap will create a negative self-concept or self-concept that is not in accordance with the conditions it should be.⁶

The incongruence that occurs when the real self and ideal self do not create a fully functioning individual life. If incongruence occurs, then the individual's behavior will feel anxious, often defensive, and dissolved in life's problems. This incongruence indirectly describes the inferiority complex behavior in individuals.⁸

Inferiority complex, namely a condition in which an individual cannot compensate for feelings of inferiority, so they tend to view themselves negatively and feel powerless in the face of their environment.¹¹ An inferiority complex refers to a very strong and unconscious feeling of insignificance, feeling insecure or unable to cope with the problems at hand. According to² Inferiority complex can also be called an abnormal state because this is another window of feelings of inferiority which generally lead to things that are negative. There are four external factors that cause feelings of inferiority, namely attitudes or parenting styles from parents, social drawbacks (economic status, family circumstances, and race), physical disabilities, and mental limitations.⁴ There are several aspects as indicators of feelings of inferiority or inferiority feeling, namely social confidence, school abilities, self-regard, physical appearance, and physical abilities. The use of social media affects aspects of physical appearance.¹⁰ Social media contributes to body dissatisfaction in adolescents. This means that social media plays a role in the physical appearance of adolescents.³

TikTok can influence the formation of adolescent self concepts. If it is not accompanied by a positive attitude, the various content seen can create a stimulus that forms a negative self concept for adolescents. Inferiority complex is a condition in which individuals cannot compensate for feelings of inferiority so they tend to view their self concepts negatively and feel powerless to face the environment. The urgency or the aims of this study is about to determine the description of inferiority complex behavior in adolescent users of the TikTok application.

METHOD

This study uses a mixed method. The research method in this study used informal methods using informal tests. Informal test is a type of test that is not systematic and does not have a definite procedure. Informal tests or informal assessments have advantages such as being flexible and can be carried out incidentally. The disadvantages of informal tests are the stability and accuracy that are uncertain, so that users are worried that they

can abuse and be unprepared.⁵ This research refers to research conducted by¹² who used an inferiority feeling scale instrument based on the feeling of inadequacy scale measuring tool by Field & Courtney. This measuring instrument has 33 items covering 5 aspects such as self-regard (7 items), social confidence (12 items), school abilities (7 items), physical appearance (6 items), and physical abilities (4 items). The measuring instrument will be used in the form of a Likert Scale consisting of a value of 1 (never) and 7 (always).

Subjects were selected randomly using a purposive sampling method with the criteria of teenage girls or boys, aged 16-18 years and using the social media Tiktok. This criterion is used based on Hurlock's Theory which states that adolescence lasts from the ages of 13 to 16 years or 17 years, and the end of adolescence starts from the ages of 16 to 18 years. The place for this research is carried out online. Procurement of the quantitative method was carried out by distributing online questionnaires via the Google form while in the process of in-depth interviews using the social conference platform website, namely Google Meet.

The population in this study is 34 teenager by age 16-18 years old from both genders who actively playing social media TikTok. This study took place in Indonesia and the sample in this research were 2 subjects in each Inferiority Complex category based on Field & Courtney's feeling of inadequacy scale (e.g. low, medium, and high inferiority complex). Researchers used quantitative and qualitative approach in this study. Research data is collected by using inferiority feeling scale instrument based on Field & Courtney's feeling of inadequacy scale, observation, and interview. Researchers used these 2 methods to indepth the information from participants about inferiority complex behavior in adolescent TikTok social media users and its related aspects.

Furthermore, based on the score from the inferiority feeling scale instrument, deepening of information was carried out using qualitative methods in the form of observation and interviews with 2 subjects with low category Inferiority Complex scores, 2 subjects with moderate Inferiority Complex scores, and 2 subjects with high Inferiority Complex scores.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The overall scores obtained after distributing the online questionnaires were analyzed to test the research data. The results of this analysis then became the basis for making low, medium, and high categories of

inferior behavior for each participant. The results of the reliability test with the Cronbach alpha formula obtained a reliability value of 0.821. Hypothetical statistics are obtained using the formula proposed by Azwar (2015), namely

X_{min} = number of items \times 1, X_{max} = number of items \times 5, mean (μ) = $1/2 (X_{max} + X_{min})$, SD (σ) = $1/6 (X_{max} - X_{min})$. The Inferiority Complex scale hypothetical score can be seen in Table 1:

Table 1. Complex Inferiority Scale Hypothetical Score

Variable	Items	Hypothetic Score			
		X min	X max	Mean	SD
Inferiority Complex	37	37	185	111	24,67

Source: Primary Data, 2022

The results of the hypothetical scores that have been obtained are then used for classification or categorization of data. The purpose of categorization is to place subjects into groups whose positions are tiered (eg. from low to high) based on the variable being

measured (Azwar, 2015). In this study, subjects were grouped into 3 categories, namely low, medium and high categories with this norm formula that categorized with this categorization norm formula in table 2 below.

Table 2. Categorization Norm Formula

No	Category	Norm Formula
1	Low	$X < (\mu - 1,0 \sigma)$
2	Medium	$(\mu - 1,0 \sigma) \leq X < (\mu + 1,0 \sigma)$
3	High	$(\mu + 1,0 \sigma) \leq X$

Source: Azwar, 2015

The results of the Inferiority Complex categorization showed that of the 34 research samples, there were 3 people who were included in the low category with a percentage of 8.82%, then in the medium category there were 29 samples with a percentage of 85.30% and 2 samples with a percentage of 5.88% who were included in the high category. on the Inferiority

Complex variable score. This proves that the Inferiority Complex of final year students is considered moderate because as many as 29 samples fall into the medium category. In this study, inferiority complex scale categorization calculated using this categorization in table 3 below.

Table 3. Inferiority Complex Scale Categorization

Variable	Category		
	Low	Medium	High
Inferiority Complex	$X < X < (\mu - 1,0 \sigma)$	$(\mu - 1,0\sigma) \leq X < (\mu + 1,0 \sigma)$	$(\mu + 1,0 \sigma) \leq X$
	$X < (111 - 24,67)$	$(111 - 24,67) \leq (111 + 24,67)$	$(111 + 24, 67) \leq X$
	$X < 86,33$	$86,33 \leq X < 135,67$	$135,67 \leq X$

Source: Primary Data, 2022

This study focuses on informal tests using a feeling of inadequacy scale measuring instrument. Based on the calculations that have been calculated using the IBM SPSS Statistics 23 software, the results are obtained where the low categorization is indicated by a score $X < 86.33$, then for the medium category it is indicated by a score of $86.33 \leq X < 135.67$ and $135.67 \leq X$ for the category tall one. The medium category has the highest percentage,

namely 85.30%, while the high category is 8.82% and the low category is 5.88%. This shows that respondents with the criteria of teenagers aged 16-18 years still have feelings of inferiority but on the other hand they do not.

In this study using a measuring instrument scale feeling of inadequacy. The Feeling of Inadequacy measuring instrument can be used to measure feelings of inferiority. Feeling of Inadequacy measurement tool in

which according¹² there are aspects consisting of Social Confidence, School Abilities, Self-Regard, Physical Appearance, and Physical Abilities. This measurement tool is also the basis of the interview guide as a qualitative approach method. In subjects 1 and 2 with low categories, they have similarities in the Social Confidence aspect in which the two subjects do not have pessimistic feelings when viewing TikTok content that contains successes that have been achieved by individuals of the same age as them. This was obtained from in-depth interviews with the two subjects who stated that they saw TikTok's content regarding success as being used as motivation. This shows that both subjects have stable feelings and are confident in their ability to achieve the same success with the content they see. In subjects 3 and 4 in the moderate category, there are differences in the Social Confidence aspect. Subject 3 quite often has pessimistic feelings about himself but at the same time the subject is still able to show his abilities in front of other people even though sometimes he also feels not optimal. Unlike the case with subject 4, in the Social Confidence aspect, he has very negative feelings about himself so that it is not uncommon for feelings of inferiority to always haunt him. Subjects 5 and 6 with high categories have similarities in this aspect. Both of them have low feelings about their own abilities and they always feel this when they see other people and both of them often feel less attractive in the eyes of other people. Subject 6 also admitted that he sometimes felt very inferior when he saw content creators who excel because he quite often compared the content creator's success with his life.

The second aspect is the School Abilities aspect in which in this aspect the individual feels inadequate and considers himself very low in terms of quality, strength, competence, and skills when carrying out academic assignments. Subjects 1 and 2 with low categories have differences in this aspect. Subject 1 felt that he was very good at doing academic assignments and he admitted that this was evidenced by his grades. Even when his grades are not good, he rarely compares with other people's because he believes that if he works harder he can be even better. Subject 2 admitted that he never compared himself to others when he failed because according to him it could only make him sick, therefore he preferred to avoid it. Subject 3 explained that he lacked confidence in his academic abilities when he remembered things that had hurt him in the past but felt he could be consistent in completing responsibilities. Subject 4 in the moderate category admitted that he was sometimes

unsure and less consistent in choosing something. Subjects 5 and 6 have some differences even though they are both in the high category. Subject 5 said that he realized his potential but often felt inferior and emotionally tired if he had to meet other people's expectations. The subject also feels worthless and gets lost in his negative thoughts when he sees other people's social media posts that are more accomplished than him. Subject 6 felt he was not consistent in academics because he had to work while at school, which made it difficult for him to balance responsibilities. Subject 6 feels left behind from other friends because they have to learn other things at work but also have to master subjects at school.

The third aspect is the Self-regard aspect. This aspect describes the state of the individual having a hard and demeaning perception of himself as well as paying little attention to interests. Subjects 1 and 2 in the low category have similarities in this third aspect, namely both have a good perception of themselves. This is obtained from the results of their interviews where both of them rarely feel low and pessimistic when they are compared to other people. Apart from that, they are currently focusing on increasing their interests and talents as well as the similarities between the two of them in the family which has always been a support system. In Subjects 3 and 4 which are in the medium category have some similarities. Subject 3 has a feeling that he has low abilities and is pessimistic because he is often compared to those closest to him so he feels he does not have any abilities. Subject 4 also feels this way and will be increasingly unsure of his abilities if he sees other people who have higher abilities than himself. Subjects 3 and 4 both have the same way to generate self-confidence, namely to keep repeating, trying, and learning from previous mistakes. Subjects 5 and 6 are subjects included in the high category. Subject 5 sometimes feels sad about his own abilities even though he is aware that he should not be dragged into sadness, while subject 6 himself rarely tells about his physical problems to those closest to him because he is often compared and tends to surrender to the situation. Subject 5 often blames himself, feels hopeless, and has no hope when facing problems. Subject 6 on the other hand often questions why he can't appear like other people, he is also often alone when facing problems.

The fourth aspect is the Physical Appearance aspect. This aspect emphasizes the way individuals judge, see, and pay attention to their physical appearance. Subject

1 in the low category admits that he is a typical individual who is very concerned about his physical appearance and takes great care of it. So from that he admits that it's rare to be insecure because he currently feels that the physical is not everything. However, Subject 2 admitted that he was very concerned about his physical appearance and sometimes he still felt insecure when he saw someone who was more than him, but Subject 2 admitted that when he felt insecure there was a support system that always supported him and always said that he could also be beautiful like the others. Subjects 3 and 4 in the medium category have differences from the low category. Subject 3 always feels confident because he often introspects himself, he will improve his appearance as much as possible if he looks lacking. Subject 4 considered himself to have an ordinary physical appearance without comparing himself to other people. Subjects 5 and 6 in the high category have differences in this aspect. Subject 5 felt insecure because he had vitiligo. Subject 6 often has a desire to improve his body shape when he sees workout content on his TikTok page. Subject 6 admitted that his body shape was rather full and seeing finches (thin, tall, slender) would have a more attractive appearance. This also makes subject

6 often aware of the deficiencies in small forms that exist in him such as striped skin color and unruly hair.

The fifth aspect is the last aspect which is the Physical Abilities aspect. This aspect describes how individuals assess the performance of their physical abilities. Subjects 1 and 2 have similarities in the fifth aspect, namely they can explain what abilities they have during the interview session. This shows that they can assess their abilities well without feeling inferior or pessimistic about their respective abilities. Subjects 3 and 4 have their own differences. Subject 3 feels that he has the ability and is consistent in sports. Subject never felt inferior and saw positive things from other people when learning sports, he also felt he had good physical abilities. Subject 4 felt inferior about his ability to exercise when compared to other people because the subject felt that he had lower stamina than other people. Subjects 5 and 6 are similar to each other. In subject 5, his physical coordination abilities were felt to be poor in teamwork, while in subject 6 he felt that he often saw that sport was an easy thing but difficult to do directly. Subject 6 also said that having a full body posture also made it difficult for him to do light sports such as jogging.

Table 4. Inferiority Complex Aspect 1 (Social Confidence)

Aspect 1	Social Confidence
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rarely feel inferior and pessimistic ● Always think positive
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feeling pessimistic but can be overcome ● Think negatively about yourself ● Have feelings of inferiority
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Always feel less attractive in the eyes of other people ● Always feel inferior when seeing other people's success

Source: Primary Data, 2022

Table 5. Inferiority Complex Aspect 2 (School Abilities)

Aspect 2	School Abilities
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does not compare himself with others ● Feeling that he has done a good job
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Less consistent with choices ● Not confident with academics
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lost in negative thoughts and emotionally exhausted ● Difficulty balancing responsibilities

Source: Primary Data, 2022

Table 6. Inferiority Complex Aspect 3 (Self Regard)

Aspect 3	Self Regard
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have a good self-perception ● Focus on increasing one's own interests and talents ● Family as the foremost support system

Aspect 3	Self Regard
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insecure because they are often compared • Pessimistic when they see other people have higher abilities • Repeating and trying is a way to increase self-esteem
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is often alone • Often blames himself to the point of despair

Source: Primary Data, 2022

Table 7. Inferiority Complex Aspect 4 (Physical Appearance)

Aspect 4	Physical Appearance
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very concerned about physical appearance • Support system that is always there when you are insecure
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels that his physical appearance is mediocre • Improves physical appearance if something is lacking
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always feel insecure • Insecure is exacerbated when viewing TikTok content about ideal bodies

Source: Primary Data, 2022

Table 8. Inferiority Complex Aspect 5 (Physical Abilities)

Aspect 5	Physical Abilities
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing his physical abilities
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insecure in terms of sports
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical coordination is not good when working in a team • Feeling that you have obstacles when you want to exercise

Source: Primary Data, 2022

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been done, it is answer the aims of this study that there are 3 categorizations of inferior behavior based on the distribution of the feeling of inadequacy scale measurement tool, namely low, medium, and high categories. This study was successful in uncovering a picture of inferior behavior in adolescent social media users of Tiktok through qualitative methods based on interviews with several sample participants who were involved in filling out the measuring instrument. It is necessary to enforce psychological interventions for subjects with high category inferior behavior in the form of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Then, for future research, it is necessary to specify the tiktok content that teenagers watch so that research objectives can be carried out more specifically.

It can be concluded from the results in each category that those in the high category feel inferior when they see TikTok content that they feel are better than them. For example, content about beauty about the ideal body where one subject can feel a high level of insecurity when seeing the content creator's ideal body because he feels his body is not ideal. Subjects in the moderate category can also be at a high level of inferiority when they

see TikTok content that is more successful than them.

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