

## Body Objectification and Social Capital Among Unesa Female Students: An Ecofeminist-Pierre Bourdieu Analysis

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### Abstract

*This study examines the phenomenon of physical objectification and the use of beauty as a social asset among female students at Surabaya State University (Unesa) from an ecofeminist perspective and that of Pierre Bourdieu. On campus, women's appearance often becomes the center of social attention, whether through comments on physical appearance, visual criteria set by organizations, or body representations on social media platforms. Given these conditions, this study aims to explain how beauty norms on campus are formed, how female students internalize these norms, and how beauty functions as a social asset in student relationships. This study employs a qualitative method, conducting in-depth interviews and participant observation with female students engaged in academic and organizational activities. Data were analyzed using ecofeminism theory to understand the domination and control over women's bodies, as well as Bourdieu's concepts of social capital, cultural capital, and habitus to explain how beauty operates as a strategic asset in social relations. Findings indicate that the objectification of the body manifests in visual judgments, beauty standards, and selection based on appearance. Beauty functions as cultural capital embodied in the body, which is converted into social capital within campus dynamics and provides broader opportunities to access social networks. These results emphasize that women's bodies on campus are not merely private spaces but also a field of negotiation between individual freedom and campus aesthetic pressures. This study recommends that future research investigate the relationship between gender, campus media, and the construction of beauty in a digital context.*

**Keywords:** Ecofeminism, body objectification, social capital, beauty, female students.

### INTRODUCTION

Currently, the phenomenon of objectification of women's bodies on campus has become a crucial social issue to be studied, especially with the criteria of beauty increasingly being promoted on social media and in digital culture. This problem is prevalent in universities, such as Surabaya State University (Unesa), previous studies indicate that

women's physical appearance is often judged according to societal norms of beauty, which impacts how they are viewed and treated in social relationships (Li et al., 2025). In higher education, this phenomenon is increasingly evident, as female students' physical appearance influences their assessments, treatment, and interactions within organizations. Based on the results of this study, several informants revealed that physical appearance is not only considered part of personal identity but also a social space where meanings and expectations are continuously being constructed within the campus environment.

At Surabaya State University (*Unesa*), this phenomenon can be seen in the way people interact, where beauty is considered a social asset that can open up connections, opportunities, and acceptance within groups. Female students who are considered to meet certain beauty criteria often obtain important positions in organizations, become famous in various campus events, and have the opportunity to enjoy broader social access. On the other hand, female students who are not considered to meet general criteria often feel subtly excluded. This situation indicates that appearance is no longer merely a personal matter but has become a social mechanism that controls power dynamics within the university environment. This aligns with Pierre Bourdieu's perspective, which highlights that physical characteristics can function as symbolic capital that influences opportunities for social interaction and acceptance within a social order (Bourdieu, 1986).

Female students on campus, particularly at Surabaya State University, have diverse appearances. Each student has their own characteristics in terms of appearance, such as clothing and makeup. Based on interviews, several informants revealed that on campus, they compete not only academically but also based on physical appearance. Judgments about a person's physical appearance are often considered normal, and attractive female students receive special privileges from others. For example, in campus ambassador elections, the assessment is certainly not only based on academic performance (Piercey et al., 2023). The judges also consider a person's beauty and physical appearance.

Several previous studies have examined how women are objectified in the media, work environments, or the digital world. However, analysis of how the practice of body objectification functions in student life, especially in relation to social capital, is still very limited. Existing research has mostly highlighted the psychological effects of objectification or views on beauty, without exploring how women's bodies are seen as social assets that can

be used to gain symbolic advantages on campus. Not only that, most studies do not link this phenomenon to the social context on campus, which also plays a role in setting standards of beauty and gender relations (Jiménez-garcía et al., 2025).

Research related to the objectification of women's bodies at the national level, especially among female students, has been conducted extensively in various countries. Previous research by Chang Hu, Wen Zhang, and Wenying Huang (2025) revealed that self-objectification can increase anxiety about social appearance and trigger strict dieting behavior among female students (Hu et al., 2025). This underscores that social pressure regarding appearance has significant psychosocial effects. Similar findings were also revealed by Li et al. (2025), showing that the use of social media platforms can stimulate jealousy towards other women's physical appearance and increase interest in cosmetic surgery (Li et al., 2025).

The phenomenon of body objectification and pressure to meet beauty standards in higher education environments is increasing, mainly due to the performative culture on campus social media, the rise of beauty culture, and symbolic competition among female students. Existing research rarely uses an ecofeminist perspective, even though this approach is important for understanding how women's bodies and nature both face domination, control, and commodification (Tasha Anidya Camila, Patmawaty Taibe, 2023). The ecofeminist perspective offers a framework for interpreting beauty not only as a social construct, but also as the result of broader power relations within patriarchy and capitalism. This weakness makes this research highly relevant and important to study in depth.

The limitations of previous research provide an opportunity for further research focusing on female students at Surabaya State University (Unesa) as the primary subjects, combining ecofeminist theory with social capital analysis. Therefore, this study uses a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews to understand female students' experiences regarding body objectification, beauty standards, and the dynamics of social relations on campus (Creswell, 2014). The primary data source for this study comes from interviews with five students actively involved in various academic and social activities on campus. Informants were selected using purposive sampling due to their relevance to the research topic. Secondary data was obtained from relevant academic literature sources, such as journal articles, books, and previous research addressing topics such as objectification, ecofeminism, and social capital.

To ensure accurate data, this study compared responses from various sources and examined findings from various theoretical perspectives. Furthermore, members were involved to verify the accuracy of the information provided by the sources. Using an analytical approach, this study utilizes an ecofeminist perspective to examine how women's bodies are often subjected to control, commercialization, and domination within a patriarchal system (Shiva, 1988). This approach is combined with Pierre Bourdieu's framework, particularly the concepts of habitus, cultural capital, and social capital. In this context, physical appearance is considered a form of cultural capital that can transform into social capital, thus influencing female students' ability to access various resources, gain recognition, and position themselves in a better social position on campus (Bourdieu, 1986). This method allows the study to describe structural aspects and experiences that cannot be measured simply with numbers alone.

This study aims to understand how Unesa female students experience and negotiate the objectification of their bodies, as well as how physical appearance and beauty norms function as social capital in the context of friendship, organizations, and academic situations. In other words, this study argues that beauty is not merely an individual identity, but rather acts as a social mechanism formed through the dynamics of power on campus. The choice of an ecofeminist approach is considered appropriate because it can reveal the structures of domination that influence women's bodily experiences, making this research essential, significant, and providing a theoretical contribution to the field of gender studies in Indonesia.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Theoretical Framework: Ecofeminism and Piere Bourdieu's**

This research uses an ecofeminist approach to examine how women's bodies are socially constructed and situated within patriarchal structures. Ecofeminism emphasizes the relationship between women's power and the larger systems of control that govern both the natural environment and the human body. Within this framework, women's bodies are often perceived as objects to be judged, constrained, and transformed according to societal expectations, particularly through generally accepted standards of beauty and feminine traits

(Shiva, 1988). In campus life, this form of control is often subtle and taken for granted, occurring through everyday interactions and the judgments of others.

Furthermore, this research employs Pierre Bourdieu's approach, which emphasizes that social life is shaped through the relationship between habitus, capital, and field (Bourdieu, 1986). Habitus is an internal condition shaped by social life experiences, which causes a person to perceive and respond to their social environment in certain ways. In this case, female students can understand and apply generally accepted norms of beauty, then channel these norms through their dress and behavior in their daily interactions on campus.

Furthermore, Bourdieu described capital as a crucial component in determining one's position in society. Physical appearance can be considered a tangible form of cultural capital, as it is linked to the body and is displayed through style, grooming, and displays of beauty. This form of capital can be transformed into social capital, allowing one to gain access to social networks, recognition, and opportunities in certain social settings. Consequently, students who meet generally accepted beauty standards may receive greater recognition and visibility within the campus environment (Bourdieu, 1986).

Based on this perspective, this study uses several indicators: analytical, recognition, social access, and social position. Recognition is how a person receives attention and recognition from others in interactions. Social access is a person's opportunity to join groups or activities on campus. Social position is a person's level of status or likelihood of acceptance within the social environment. These indicators are used to examine how female students experience the objectification of their bodies and how beauty plays a role as a form of social capital in their daily college experiences. The results of the study show that female students at Unesa are experiencing a process of body.

### **Experiencing Body Objectification In Campus Life**

The results of the study show that female students at Unesa are experiencing a process of body objectification that occurs continuously on campus. This objectification arises not only from direct comments, but also through social conflicts and unwritten beauty norms that circulate among fellow students. Many female students have admitted that physical appearance often determines how they are accepted or evaluated in social interactions. They realize that their bodies are no longer just a part of themselves, but have become a “visual identity” that is closely linked to their social reputation. This is in line with previous findings

showing that women's bodies are often positioned as objects of control and commodification in social structures, particularly through beauty standards and cultural expectations (Ayub, 2025)

Based on interviews with informants conducted in August And September 2025, a pattern was found that the pressure to ppear “neat, clean, attractive, and beautiful” is considered a requirement for joining certain social groups on campus. Informants who are active in campus organizations or are often seen in public places feel a much greater pressure to look good. For example, when these informants were MCs or activity organizers on campus, appearance was seen as “first impression capital,” which is the first thing that influences a person's social acceptance. This shows that women's bodies are not fully understood as a biological aspect, but as an asset in a social context.

From an ecofeminist perspective, this condition illustrates how women's bodies are treated as objects of visual consumption, similar to the treatment of nature in patriarchal social structures. Ecofeminist theory argues that women and nature both undergo processes of “control” and “taming.” On campus, some female students feel that they are required to always conform to prevailing standards of beauty. They think that their bodies must be “maintained” in order to remain acceptable to everyone. This can be seen in the behavior of female students who feel the need to wear makeup, choose their outfits carefully, or take care of their bodies for fear of being considered unattractive.

Female students feel that this pressure is increasingly strong because of the campus's focus on visual aspects. This can be seen when, during a campus event, the photos and videos taken only highlight the beautiful female students. Female students feel that their bodies are always being watched or that they resemble the concept of self-surveillance in objectification theory. This finding is in line with research in the field of Cyberpsychology (2024), which shows that exposure to images of ideal bodies on digital platforms increases self-objectification in young women. This finding is supported by recent research showing that experiences of objectification among female college students increase body awareness and self-monitoring behaviors, reinforcing the normalization of appearance-based evaluation (Zhang et al., 2024).

Several female student informants revealed that their physical appearance affects the amount of trust given to them in public positions, such as MC, publication division, or public relations. Within Bourdieu's theoretical framework, beauty is considered social capital, a

source of value that creates trust and social access. Research by Metin Cinaroglu & Yilmazer (2025) also supports this view, explaining that women with high levels of self-objectification tend to use their bodies to gain social recognition (Çınaro & Yilmazer, 2025).

It should be noted that some female students are unaware that the expectation to look beautiful is a form of social pressure. They consider it to be “normal.” This process indicates the internalization of patriarchal norms, as described in research by Angelin & Umar (2025), which found that women often accept beauty standards without realizing that this is part of social control (Angelin & Umar, 2025).

Social comparison among women is also a factor that encourages objectification, especially on campus social media platforms. Event documentation, posts from organizations, and photos of activities serve as an indirect arena for comparing physical appearance. Li et al. (2025) found that this type of comparison increases body envy and the desire to change one's appearance (Li et al., 2025). This is clearly seen in Unesa female students who feel they “need to adjust their appearance so as not to be less beautiful.”

Body objectification also affects self-confidence. Many female students feel more confident when they feel “beautiful,” but feel less confident when they do not. Research conducted by Angelin & Umar (2025) shows that self-perception directly contributes to body dissatisfaction and unstable self-esteem among female students (Angelin & Umar, 2025). This situation highlights that the body has become the center of young women's social identity.

Some female students are beginning to show signs of rejection, for example by questioning why women must always look perfect while men tend to have more freedom. This reflects the emergence of new thinking about women's bodies. Research published by the *Journal of Eating Disorders* (2025) on body-positive content indicates that women are beginning to fight against dominant beauty standards (Jiménez-garcía et al., 2025). A similar phenomenon has also begun to appear at Unesa, although it has not yet become a strong movement.

The objectification of female students' bodies at Unesa is a complex situation influenced by campus culture, social media, gender relations, and aesthetic capitalism. The concept of ecofeminism helps to understand how control over women's bodies is part of the structure of patriarchy and consumption. Bourdieu's theory of social capital explains how beauty can function as an asset that can be “used” to gain relationships and legitimacy.

Female students' bodies are not merely biological entities, but also arenas where power and identity are negotiated in the dynamics of campus life.

### **Body Objectification in Student Social Relations**

Physical objectification among Unesa female students is evident in seemingly trivial daily interactions, which, however, actually place the female body as the focus of social judgment. In various campus activities, such as organizational meetings, class discussions, and documentation, female students often feel that their appearance is given far more attention than their academic achievements or contributions. This phenomenon shows how women's bodies are considered “social representations” that need to meet certain criteria to be accepted in the campus environment.

In informal areas like cafeterias, faculty corridors, or even organizational WhatsApp groups, comments about physical appearance often arise unexpectedly. Expressions like “Why do you look pale today?” “You'd be prettier if you let your hair down,” or “Your photo is really good, it's really radiant,” sounds as if it's normal. However, this form of attention makes the body an object of observation, rather than an element of a more complex identity. This aligns with the thinking of Fredrickson & Roberts (1997), who stated that women are often forced to view their bodies from the perspective of others.

In classroom observations, female students also stated that they felt more “noticed” when wearing certain clothes or when appearing neater than usual. One of the speakers stated:

*“Sometimes when I wear a little makeup, people around me react differently right away. As if more friendly, he's talked to more often. But if my face is without makeup, people around me usually have a neutral reaction,”* (Interview, N1, August 2025).

This statement confirms that social interaction on campus is heavily influenced by physical performativity. Objectification also appears in the context of recording activities on campus. Images from organizational activities often portray female students as “iconic.” They were chosen to appear on the organization's posters or social media content because they were considered “more suitable” or “more appealing to look at.” This shows how the bodies of female students are used as a visual asset to shape the organization's image, a form of symbolic capital that reinforces Bourdieu's theory (1986). Female students report that

comments about their bodies sometimes make them feel the need to conform to certain standards. One respondent stated:

*“When there's a formal event, I automatically think I need to look beautiful. Because if not, it will look like you don't appreciate the event or are unprofessional,”* (Interview, N3, August 2025).

This reflects how social pressure regarding appearance on campus also shapes body patterns (*habitus*). In friendships, objectification happens subtly thru humor between friends. Although they seem trivial, jokes like “Oh, you're getting bigger,” or “You're so thin, did you go on a diet?” can be hurtful. It continues to reinforce excessive attention to physical appearance. This phenomenon indicates that women's bodies are a point of social judgment, even in the most familiar environments.

Previous studies have also shown similar phenomena. For example, Rohmah & Saraswati (2023) found that female students generally accept beauty standards on campus as part of an “unwritten social rule”. Meanwhile, Novia Ciutarno (2024) in the *Communicare* journal explains that campus social media reinforces objectification by emphasizing the visualization of women as an attraction for organizational content (Ciutarno et al., 2024). Some respondents revealed that they frequently do a “*self-check*” before entering class or engaging in campus activities.

*“When I enter the classroom, I automatically check my appearance in the bathroom first, worrying about being seen as unkempt or messy,”* (Interview, N1, August 2025).

This habit indicates that objectification makes female students more aware of their body appearance (*self-surveillance*). Nevertheless, a number of female students also use appearance as a strategy in social interaction. They acknowledge that looking attractive can help them communicate, attract more attention from instructors, or make the organization appear more professional. This is related to the concept of bodily capital, which is how the body is used as a social asset that can provide advantages, as expressed in Bourdieu's theory (1986).

### **Self- Objectification in Academic Activities on Campus**

The phenomenon of self-objectification appears very strong in academic activities among Unesa female students, especially when they attend classes, give presentations, or meet with lecturers. Many of them consider appearance not just a matter of personal comfort,

but part of “academic readiness” as judged by the campus environment. In field observations, several female students were seen checking themselves before entering class, from adjusting their hijabs and ensuring their makeup wasn't smudged to checking their clothing. This behavior isn't just a habit; it reflects how the body is internally controlled to meet unspoken social expectations. One respondent stated:

*“When I'm about to give a presentation, I definitely prepare my clothes beforehand, worrying about being perceived as not serious or unprofessional. Actually, the core of the presentation is the material, but there's still pressure to look neat and attractive,”* (Interview, N4, September 2025).

This statement describes how body language becomes part of academic evaluation, not just the intellectual aspect. This phenomenon is also observed when female students interact with lecturers. Many people feel that if they look neat and attractive, it can influence how their professors treat them. Some respondents acknowledged differences in treatment when they appeared “more prepared.” If I look neater, the lecturers are usually more interested.

*“Once, when I was very tired and looked disheveled, his response was different,”* (Interview, N4, 2025).

Statements like this indicate how beauty standards have permeated academic relationships, with the body serving as a means of maintaining self-image in front of academic authorities. According to the self-objectification perspective of Fredrickson & Roberts (1997), this phenomenon occurs when women view their bodies from the perspective of others and evaluate themselves based on external criteria. Female students not only focus on learning but also monitor themselves as subjects who might be judged by others. This is also related to the idea of the “male gaze,” which was initially found in the context of media but spread to the campus environment as a social structure that judges women based on physical appearance.

From an ecofeminist perspective, the female body is regulated by a logic similar to the exploitation of the environment: both are seen as something that needs to be controlled, managed, and maintained to conform to modern cultural standards. Within the campus environment, the bodies of female students serve as an arena for their social management; they are required to appear “neat” and “clean,” even when engaged in academic activities that should prioritize intellectual ability. Ecofeminism views this process as a form of domesticating women's bodies, which has become the norm in campus culture.

In addition, that female students at various universities in Indonesia face pressure to meet modern beauty standards, which are considered an indicator of discipline in their studies. These findings are relevant in the context of Unesa, where appearance is often linked to the professionalism of the students.

In group discussions, female students often feel less confident when presenting themselves naturally. Some of them admitted to intentionally using light makeup during presentations to look more prepared and confident.

*“During the group presentation, I felt the need to dress up a little. Friends said that if his appearance wasn't serious, it would give a negative impression on the group's grade,”* (Interview, N5, September 2025).

This statement highlights how self-objectification affects academic performance and damages relationships between students. This social activity also made some female students believe that their academic identity was related to their physical performance. When they perform poorly, they are called “unprepared” or “not serious enough.” This leads to the internalization of beauty standards, which is part of an academic habit that is not very strong but has a significant impact.

The phenomenon of self-objectification can have a negative impact on the mental health of female students, especially when they are constantly “monitored” in academic activities. Self-objectification increases performance anxiety and reduces learning focus. Unlike the material preparation, this finding was accompanied by several Unesa student informants who made the performance more difficult.

### **Construction of Beauty Standards in Campus Environment**

The Unesa campus environment demonstrates the existence of beauty standards that tend to be similar and recurrent across the various social settings used by students. In direct observation, female students often exhibit similar appearance patterns, from how they dress and apply makeup to their skincare routines, which have become part of their daily lives. These standards do not emerge spontaneously but are formed through ongoing interactions with peers, organizational culture, campus social media, and the practice of exposing one's body at formal and informal events (Zheng & Zhao, 2024). In an interview, one informant said:

*“On campus, it's like there are rules. If a girl doesn't take care of her skin or wear neat clothes, she feels like the center of attention.”* (Interview, N2, August 2025)

This statement indicates that beauty standards have become part of the campus habitus, an unwritten value system that dictates how a person “should” appear in academic public spaces. Based on Bourdieu's (1986) concept of habitus, these standards do not need to be explicitly communicated but operate through existing habits, expectations, and social perceptions. The pressure to appear attractive is also intensified by the presence of social media on campus, such as accounts used to record events, posts from organizational committees, and aesthetic content created by students themselves. Many female students feel that appearing attractive in campus documents is not just about appearance, but also about their social identity. Another informant added:

*“If there's a faculty or department event, there will definitely be photos, and that makes me think twice about my clothes. I'm afraid it will look immodest if I post it on the department's Instagram.”* (Interview, N3, August 2025)

This finding aligns with research by Li et al. (2025), which shows that social media exposure increases women's tendency to compare themselves and maintain an ideal body image, including in the campus context (Li et al., 2025). At Unesa, social media plays a significant role in reinforcing beauty standards because it serves as a frequently accessed social display platform for students. Campus organizational culture also contributes to the formation of beauty standards.

Some organizations are often associated with criteria such as “neat,” “fashionable,” or “beautiful,” so female students who join these organizations feel the need to conform. This is supported by a study by Çınaroğlu & Yılmaz (2025), which found that pressure on women's aesthetics is increasing in competitive and highly visual social environments, including within student organizations (Çınaro & Yılmaz, 2025). Furthermore, academic activities such as presentations, seminars, and laboratory experiments indirectly pressure female students to appear neat and presentable. For some, looking neat is considered essential to demonstrate seriousness in their studies. However, for others, these standards actually become pressure, forcing them to constantly pay attention to their physical appearance.

*“I sometimes feel tired because I have to think about my appearance just to go to campus. Even female friends can comment on my appearance if I look plain.”* (Interview, N4, September 2025)

This phenomenon aligns with research by Chang Hu et al. (2025), which found that young women tend to internalize beauty standards as part of their social identity (Hu et al., 2025). This leads to increased self-objectification in everyday life, including in formal educational settings. From an ecofeminist perspective, beauty standards on campus can be interpreted as a form of domestication of the female body, where the body is perceived as having to be regulated, adorned, and maintained to meet social expectations. Ecofeminism highlights how women's bodies and nature are both treated by patriarchal and capitalist ideologies. Unesa female students feel pressured to follow skincare, makeup, and fashion trends, which are often oriented towards consumption and the commodification of the body.

At the same time, this process is closely linked to broader social influences that shape body perception. Previous studies show that female students are highly affected by social comparison and exposure to dominant beauty ideals, leading to dissatisfaction with their physical appearance (Riyami et al., 2024). This suggests that beauty operates as both a social expectation and a competitive resource within the campus environment. This pressure is exacerbated when appearance is considered a form of social capital. Many female students feel that appearing attractive can help build social connections, gain recognition, or appear more professional in academic activities.

Angelin & Umar's (2025) research in Makassar also found that self-objectification is often directly related to the need for social acceptance on campus (Angelin & Umar, 2025). The construction of beauty standards at Unesa is not merely an aesthetic trend but also a social phenomenon that influences how female students understand their bodies, present themselves, and interact in the academic environment. These standards emerge from the interaction of internal campus factors, social media, organizational culture, and gender pressures that have already formed within the wider society.

### **Beauty as Social Capital on the Campus of Surabaya State University**

Beauty on the Unesa campus is not only seen as a physical attribute, but is also considered a form of social capital that operates subtly in everyday interactions between students. Research shows that female students who are considered beautiful, neat, or stylish are generally more easily accepted into certain groups, receive more attention from their peers, and indirectly build social relationships more quickly (Abdoli et al., 2025). This

phenomenon aligns with Bourdieu's understanding of cultural capital embedded in the body, namely cultural capital that can generate social benefits. In an interview, one informant said:

*“To be honest, girls who are neat and beautiful are easier to invite to join groups, are usually more trusted, and are more often appreciated in organizational activities.”<sup>u</sup> (Interview, N5, September 2025)*

This statement suggests that beauty acts as a “social ticket” that makes it easier for female students to enter certain networks. This social capital is not always explicitly recognized, but it operates behind the dynamics of social interactions among students, where appearance is considered an indicator of a person's closeness, competence, or social value.

This finding aligns with research by Li et al. (2025), who explained that young women today often use their bodies as a tool of social differentiation in both educational and digital environments (Li et al., 2025). Beauty creates an impression of “worthiness” for acceptance in relationships based on trust and closeness. On campus, female students who meet beauty standards are often more frequently invited, greeted, or chosen to represent certain activities. Interactions within organizations are one of the spaces where the influence of beauty is most evident.

According to several informants, attractive members of organizations are often chosen as event presenters, poster models, or the face of certain activities. This suggests that physical appearance is part of the representation strategy of student organizations. An informant revealed:

*“In my organization, when a poster or video is published, the most attractive person is usually chosen.”<sup>u</sup> (Interview, N2, August 2025)*

This phenomenon demonstrates how female students' bodies become visual commodities used to build the organization's image. This is similar to the concept of self-objectification described by Chang Hu et al. (2025), where women increasingly view their own bodies as objects that need to be packaged to conform to social expectations (Hu et al., 2025). When they receive social rewards, such as being invited to appear in publications that feature their faces, this process is further strengthened. From an ecofeminist perspective, beauty as social capital demonstrates the relationship between women's bodies and patriarchal and consumerist social structures. Ecofeminism emphasizes that women's bodies are often viewed as “aesthetic assets” that can support a group's social function, similar to how nature is exploited for the benefit of capitalism. On campus, women's bodies become

part of the visual representation production system, although many female students are unaware of this.

This pressure leads some female students to feel the need to meet beauty standards to stay ahead of the social competition. Female students who appear attractive are perceived as more “approachable,” “more trustworthy,” or “more comfortable to work with.” In an interview, one informant stated:

*“People often judge you based on your appearance, so if you look neat and attractive, you’re considered more reliable.”* (Interview, N2, August 2025)

This reinforces Bourdieu's argument that social capital is not only built through relationships, but also through how others perceive our cultural capital, including our physical appearance, as shaped by social norms. On the other hand, female students who do not meet beauty standards often feel less confident or ignored in social interactions. Research by Angelin & Umar (2025) in Makassar shows that women who do not conform to social beauty standards tend to experience a decline in social value within their group (Angelin & Umar, 2025). A similar situation occurs at Unesa, where female students who do not "fit the criteria" often choose to withdraw from certain social spaces.

Not all female students view beauty as a necessity. Some informants indicated a rejection of these standards, opting for a simple or natural appearance for comfort. However, they acknowledged that social networks usually open up more quickly to female students who meet the aesthetic standards that dominate the campus. In other words, this difference in access to social capital still reflects symbolic inequality based on appearance. The phenomenon of beauty as social capital demonstrates that the bodies of female students at Unesa are inseparable from Power relations, social expectations, and the logic of competition within campus spaces. Appearance becomes a tool for navigating interactions, fostering trust, and building social networks, making beauty not just an aesthetic issue but also a strategic resource in campus life.

### **Accessibility to Organizations and Networks**

In campus organizations, female students who are considered to meet beauty standards typically have greater access to important positions or certain social networks. They are often placed in divisions such as public relations, publications, or event management. This is not only due to their technical abilities, but also because they are considered to have

representative value in the public eye. This phenomenon demonstrates how physical appearance that conforms to social standards can transform into social capital, such as relationships, access, and opportunities. In an interview, one member of a campus organization said:

*“Believe me, when we appear at the front, we usually choose those who look neat and attractive, because they are more easily accepted by outsiders.”*

This statement suggests that aesthetics is not simply personal taste, but rather an informal way of selecting who is worthy of being seen and who is not. The effect is the emergence of more closed social circles, where female students with certain appearances find it easier to build new connections, gain attention, and increase their social opportunities. As Bourdieu explained, this process demonstrates that campus social structures operate through seemingly “natural” mechanisms. Cultural capital such as appearance, style, and behavior are transformed into social capital, such as relationships and access within organizations. Ultimately, certain positions within organizations are no longer neutral, but instead are influenced by who is perceived to represent the institution's dominant beauty standards.

### **Female Students' Responses to the Dynamics of Beauty-Based Social Capital**

Female students' responses to the phenomenon of social capital focused on physical appearance are not uniform. Some view this as a “normal” part of campus traditions. They believe that appearance should be part of how they behave in social settings, thus legitimizing their role as “public representatives.” However, others feel pressured because certain beauty norms make them feel compelled to constantly meet expectations. In a casual conversation, one female student stated:

*“Sometimes it feels tiring, having to always look 'appropriate.' But what can you do, it's just like that on campus sometimes”* (Interview, N3, August 2025).

This pressure is not only psychological but also economic. The desire to conform to certain criteria leads some female students to spend more money on skincare, clothing, or other services. This incident demonstrates that beauty standards are not simply individual choices, but also part of a power structure that influences relationships among students: who is deemed worthy of presentation, who receives more attention, and who is more easily trusted.

Therefore, beauty serves as a political arena where social capital is generated and traded. Female students who do not meet dominant norms often feel at a disadvantage, while those who meet these criteria gain symbolic advantages in social interactions on campus.

### **The Influence of Social Media on Campus**

The results of this study align with the findings of Fredrickson & Roberts' (1997) study on Objectification Theory, which indicates that media has a significant influence on increasing self-objectification, namely the tendency for women to view their bodies through the eyes of others. In addition to this theory, recent research by Rasmussen & Smith (2022) also found that exposure to visual content with uniform beauty standards on university social media increased women's body insecurity.

Women were more likely to adjust their dress and grooming habits after seeing the “ideal” representations displayed by university accounts. These findings corroborate the results of interviews with female students from Unesa, who felt the need to appear “presentable” when they realized that their activities could potentially be uploaded to campus social media. Social media on campus functions not only as a space for documentation but also as an arena for constructing meanings related to women's bodies. It influences how female students perceive themselves, creating pressure to consistently meet the beauty standards displayed. Social media reinforces visual power relations, where female students' bodies are constantly monitored, judged, and compared.

### **Implications of Ecofeminism in Campus Dynamics**

Ecofeminist analysis shows that female students' bodies exist within the same system as nature: controlled, valued, and symbolically exploited. Aesthetic pressures on campus also reproduce the logic of beauty capitalism, such as the consumption of skincare, makeup, and fashion as social, not just personal, needs. Ecofeminism helps us see that body objectification is not just a gender issue, but also a social structural issue that influences how women perceive themselves. The campus context shows that women's bodies become an arena for negotiation between personal agency and larger social pressures.

Analysis from an ecofeminist perspective shows that women's bodies, especially female students, exist within a social system that treats women's bodies and nature similarly both are valued, controlled, and regulated to meet specific societal needs. On the Unesa campus,

evolving beauty standards indirectly “manage” female students' bodies to conform to visual expectations considered ideal. This aligns with the arguments of ecofeminists such as Vandana Shiva (1998), who emphasize that women and nature are often victims of the same forms of exploitation under the influence of patriarchal structures and capitalism.

The aesthetic pressures experienced by female students, such as demands for clear skin, neat makeup, and a certain style of dress, demonstrate that beauty is no longer just a personal choice but has become a social necessity. Many informants stated that they feel compelled to groom themselves not only out of personal desire, but also out of fear of being perceived as unserious in their studies or less representative. One informant stated, “If I go to campus without any makeup, sometimes people look at me and think I don't care about my appearance.” This pressure demonstrates that women's bodies have become a tool for social evaluation in academic life.

The logic of capitalism in the beauty sector is also evident in campus dynamics. The use of skincare products, makeup, and fashion is commonplace, and it is considered “normal” for female students to conform to social aesthetic demands. Modern campus culture encourages women to continually invest in their bodies as part of self-improvement for social acceptance. This aligns with patterns found at Unesa, where body care is often seen as a prerequisite for appearing confident in public campus environments.

Ecofeminism helps understand that the objectification of female students' bodies is not just a gender issue, but also a broader social structure. This structure creates aesthetic norms that are then internalized by women, leading them to feel the need to monitor and evaluate their own bodies. Women's bodies often become a site of conflict between individual freedom and systemic social pressures. This is relevant to field findings where female students at Unesa negotiated the desire to appear authentic and socially pressured to adhere to campus beauty standards (Johan, 2024).

Within the university environment, women's bodies become a battleground for power: between the desire for social acceptance, the personal desire to express one's identity, and the pressures of campus visual culture that persistently emphasizes the image of the perfect woman. Ecofeminism views this situation as a form of “symbolic exploitation” in which women are compelled to alter their bodies to conform to aesthetic expectations over which they have little control. The dynamics on the Unesa campus demonstrate that the

objectification of female students' bodies stems not only from interpersonal relationships but also from campus cultural structures that enforce uniform beauty standards.

**Tabel 1.** Interview Results Table: Beauty Pressures and Implications of Ecofeminism on Campus.

Theme/Category of Findings	Description of Findings
Internalization of Beauty Standards as Habitus	Female students see the demand to appear beautiful, radiant, and well-groomed as “normal” within campus culture.
Investment in Embodied Cultural Capital	The pressure to buy makeup and outfits arises from social needs.
Symbolic Violence and Psychological Consequences	Body objectification makes students feel judged and compared physically.
Negotiation and Resistance within the Social Field	Some female students refuse to comply with these demands and choose personal comfort.

From the data in the table, it is clear that beauty trends on the Unesa campus are influenced by many interrelated social factors, not isolated events. These factors include social interactions, organizational culture, and the daily impact of social media. Thus, beauty standards are not simply a matter of individual preference, but rather the result of a long-term social process that persists and is reproduced in everyday campus life.

Many female students shared that looking attractive, radiant, or at least “pleasing to look at” seems to be an unspoken demand on campus. They feel that if they don't maintain a neat and attractive appearance, they will be judged or compared to their peers. These perceived beauty standards actually emerge from an environment that exhibits similar patterns. Over time, many female students feel that an attractive appearance is not just a desire, but a necessity for acceptance and social acceptance. This aligns with the concept of self-objectification, where women judge their bodies through the eyes of others and feel compelled to meet these expectations.

The pressure to meet these beauty standards also creates financial burdens. Many of them revealed that they had to follow certain skincare, makeup, or clothing trends to stay up-to-date. During college, they felt pressured to always look attractive for fear of receiving comments like “You look tired” or “Why are you different from usual?” As a result, self-care

shifted from a personal need to a socially determined one. When viewed through an ecofeminist lens, this is clear: women's bodies are not only “groomed,” but also become objects to be managed, polished, and marketed through commercial products.

The psychological impact is significant. Many female students feel less confident when going to campus without makeup or an attractive outfit. Some also feel inferior when photos of campus activities are posted on social media for fear of being compared to others. These feelings of anxiety and low self-esteem become part of everyday life, something perceived as “normal” when in fact they are a form of societal pressure. This indicates that objectification not only comes from the outside but also infiltrates the female students themselves because they have internalized these standards.

While most women adhere to established beauty standards, some female students choose to remain “indifferent” and resist these pressures. Some informants revealed that they deliberately present themselves naturally, using skincare sparingly, and avoiding excessive trends. While not numerous, this type of resistance is significant because it demonstrates that women have the right to determine how they view their own bodies. In the context of ecofeminism, this attitude can be seen as an effort to resist patriarchal and capitalist cultures that overly control women's bodies.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis and research findings, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of body objectification among Unesa female students is a social issue that arises from daily interactions, campus culture, social media use, and the ongoing social construction of beauty. Female students' bodies are viewed not only as biological but also as social symbols that serve as sites of assessment, identity negotiation, and battles over meaning. The results of this study indicate that female students often feel pressure to conform to campus beauty standards, ranging from “neat,” “glowing,” to “attractive,” resulting in them constantly monitoring their own bodies. This phenomenon reflects a process of self-objectification, in which female students view their bodies from the perspective of their surrounding community and strive to meet these expectations.

Through an ecofeminist lens, female students' bodies experience a control mechanism comparable to the treatment of nature in a capitalist system: adorned, regulated, and shaped to fulfill larger symbolic needs. Furthermore, Bourdieu's theory of social capital provides an

understanding that beauty functions as capital that facilitates social access to organizations, friendship networks, and various opportunities on campus. Thus, body objectification is not simply a gender issue, but also a social structural issue that influences how women perceive their bodies and their social position.

Overall, these findings suggest that the Unesa campus functions not as a neutral space, but as a social arena that plays a role in shaping and reinforcing certain beauty standards. However, the study also found resistance from a number of female students who chose not to comply with pressure to conform to aesthetics and instead pursued their personal desires. This suggests that despite the significant impact of social structures, female students still have the ability to define their own definition of beauty.

Future research should involve a larger number of participants or include male students to understand their perspectives and roles in the process of body objectification on campus. Future studies could apply visual content analysis to posts on campus social media, faculty accounts, or student groups to strengthen information regarding images of beauty. It is recommended to integrate qualitative and quantitative research methods to more accurately measure levels of self-objectification, social burden, or psychological effects.

Future research should prioritize the mental health impacts of appearance pressure on female students, such as feelings of insecurity, social anxiety, or reduced self-esteem. The ecofeminist approach can be further researched to explore the relationship between the body, the use of beauty products, and capitalism in the campus environment in more detail.

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