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## The influence of instagram on korean-style fashion trends among college students

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the impact of Instagram social media on the dress style of students of the University of Bengkulu. The research approach uses descriptive qualitative studies. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews, participant observations, and documentation of Instagram uploads. The purposive sampling technique was used to select relevant participants, namely active students aged 18–25 years from three faculties at the University of Bengkulu (Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics and Business, and Faculty of Social and Political Sciences) who actively use Instagram and often post fashion-related content. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman method, which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn, as well as triangulation to increase the validity of the findings. In sociological analysis, rational choice theory is used to understand how students adapt fashion trends on Instagram by considering various factors such as suitability, financial ability, and social acceptance. The findings show that Instagram is the main source of inspiration for students in determining their dressing style, especially related to Korean style trends. Nonetheless, students demonstrate critical ability to select and modify these trends to suit personal preferences and socio-cultural contexts. Students develop a variety of adaptive strategies, from financial management to negotiation with environmental norms, to express a unique yet relevant fashion identity. It is hoped that this research will contribute to a broader understanding of the role of social media in shaping student identities and behaviors in the digital era.



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## Introduction

In modern times, society has undergone a significant transformation in the way of interacting and communicating (Simanjuntak et al., 2022). Along with the advancement of information technology, the characteristics of an increasingly connected society create a dynamic and complex social environment (A Roli, 2024). The development of technology, especially the internet, has changed the pattern of daily life, where information can be accessed easily and quickly (Octaviani & Sinduwiatmo, 2022). Social media, as one of the products of these technological advancements, has become a major platform for individuals to communicate, share information, and express themselves (Sefia Esa Puspita Anggraeni et al., 2023).

**Table 1.** Social Media Users and Internet Penetration in Indonesia (2024)

Category	Number of Users	Percentage of Population (%)
Total Users	191 million	73,7%
Active Users	167 million	64,3%
Internet Penetration	242 million	93,4%

Source:databoks.katadata.co.id. 2024

**Table 2.** Most Popular Social Media Platforms (2024)

Platform	Number of Users (Million)	Percentage of Population (%)
YouTube	139	53,8%
Instagram	122	47,3%
Facebook	118	45,9%
WhatsApp	116	45,2%
TikTok	89	34,7%

Source:databoks.katadata.co.id. 2024

**Table 3.** Social Media User Demographic Data (2024)

Demography	Percentage
Age 18-34 years old	54,1%
Gender - Female	51,3%
Gender - Male	48,7%
Daily time average	3 hours 14 minutes
Daily Access Frequency	81%

Source:databoks.katadata.co.id. 2024

Along with the rapid development of digital technology, internet penetration in Indonesia has reached 93.4% of the population, with 242 million internet users by 2024. This data shows that about 191 million people, or 73.7% of the population, have become social media users, of which 167 million are active users of these platforms. The most popular social media is YouTube with 139 million users (53.8% of the population), followed by Instagram (122 million users or 47.3%) and Facebook (118 million users or 45.9%). Other widely used platforms include WhatsApp (116 million users or 45.2%) and TikTok (89 million users or 34.7%) (Panggabean, 2024).

In terms of demographics, the majority of social media users are in the 18-34 age group, which accounts for 54.1% of total users. Women slightly dominated with 51.3%, compared to men who reached 48.7%. The frequency of social media access is also high, with an average usage time of 3 hours and 14 minutes per day and 81% of users access the platform daily. This data indicates that social media has a significant role in users' daily lives, especially in shaping lifestyles and preferences, including in terms of dress styles among students.

Instagram, as one of the most trending social media, has an important role in shaping the identity and lifestyle of its users, especially among college students (Nainggolan et al., 2018). This shows that social media not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a mirror of the culture and values embraced by users (Shock, 2021).

Dress style is a form of self-expression that can reflect an individual's personality, social status, and values (Vinek, 2023). Dress style is also one of the important aspects of student life that reflects their identity and the values they hold (Adella, 2023). In the context of students, dress style is not only seen as a practical necessity, but also as a means to show one's identity and adjust to the social environment (Qorib et al., 2023). This phenomenon is further reinforced by the use of Instagram, where students are often exposed to various fashion inspirations that can affect their clothing choices (Khoirunnisa, 2023).

Research by (Halimah Nur Churil Aini et al., 2024) shows that platforms like Instagram are able to have a significant impact on the dress style of college students, where they tend to adopt trending trends among influencers and peers. In this case, Instagram is not just a photo-sharing platform, but also an important reference source in determining the style of dress that can affect the way students view themselves and their social environment.

In the context of the University of Bengkulu, this phenomenon is becoming increasingly interesting to be researched considering the diverse characteristics of its students, both in terms of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds (Syarafa et al., 2020). Observing that students of the University of Bengkulu tend to use social media as the main reference in determining their style of dress. Instagram, with its powerful visual features, has become a very influential platform in shaping students' fashion preferences. Through this platform, students are not only exposed to global fashion trends, but also dress styles that reflect local and contemporary values.

The influence of Instagram on the dress style of Bengkulu University students can be seen in several aspects. First, the platform is the main source of inspiration in choosing clothes, where students often adapt the styles they see from influencers or peers they follow. Second, Instagram creates certain standards in appearance that indirectly affect students' decisions in dressing. Third, the platform also facilitates the exchange of fashion information between students, creating a kind of virtual community that influences each other in terms of dress styles.

However, there are problems that arise related to the use of Instagram in determining clothing styles. Many students feel pressured to follow the trends displayed on social media, sometimes even ignoring their own comfort and personality in order to gain social recognition (Rokhmah, 2024). This creates a phenomenon where students' dress style no longer reflects their true selves, but rather what is considered "trendy" on social media. (Kesuma & Kalifia, 2023) noted that the pressure to perform according to the standards set by social media can cause students to experience anxiety and dissatisfaction with themselves. Previous research may have addressed the impact of social media on consumer behavior in general, but not many have specifically examined how Instagram affects the dress style of students at the University of Bengkulu. Therefore, it is important to explore this dynamic more deeply.

Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap that existed in previous studies by focusing on the impact of Instagram on students' dress styles. The relevance of this topic is very important, considering that students are a very active group on social media and tend to be affected by growing trends (Puspitasari & Nugrahani, 2024). According to (Sepnia & Nurhakim, 2024), students often use social media as a source of inspiration for their lifestyle, including when it comes to fashion. Goffman (1959) In his work he explains that individuals often strive to manage the impressions they show others, and social media provides a very powerful platform to do so.

In this context, students may feel the need to adjust their dress style to match the expectations that exist on social media. This creates a cycle in which the style of dress that is on social media increasingly dominates students' fashion choices, thus blurring the line between authentic self-expression and excessive social adjustment. Study conducted by Adam Zaelany (2022) with the title "Social Media Phenomenon Towards the Dress Style of Students of the Faculty of Ushuluddin Adab and Da'wah Iain Metro" revealed that it shows that FUAD IAIN Metro students have social media applications in the form of whatsapp, instagram, facebook, youtube, instagram and tiktok. Social media has a considerable role in the lives of FUAD IAIN Metro students, especially in changing their clothing styles. This is influenced by several social media accounts that they follow and these accounts have Islamic content in daily life, for example, references to Islamic dress styles to da'wah content that invites goodness.

The next research conducted by Yayuh Khufibasyaris and Hendi Suhendi (2024) with the title "The Influence of Hijab Fashion Trends on Tiktok Social Media on the Islamic Dress of Unisba Students of the Faculty of Da'wah Class of 2019" concluded that the fashion hijab trend on TikTok social media has an effect on the use of hijab among Unisba students of the Faculty of Da'wah Class of 2019. The increasing interest in buying Muslim women's clothes is trending, but still paying attention to the dress code according to the teachings of Islam. Wearing Muslim women's clothes designed with contemporary fashions is allowed while still paying attention to shari'i clothing.

This research is important to conduct for several reasons. First, to deeply understand how Instagram affects the dress decisions of University of Bengkulu students, considering that this platform has high penetration among students. Second, to identify the potential positive and negative impacts of Instagram's influence on students' dress styles, so that it can provide appropriate recommendations for universities in supporting students to express themselves in a healthy way through clothing. Third, to contribute to a broader understanding of the role of social media in shaping student identities and behaviors in the digital era.

As such, the study not only aims to explore the relationship between Instagram and college students' dress styles, but also to understand the broader social and psychological implications of this phenomenon. The results of the research are expected to provide valuable insights for students, educational institutions, and other researchers who are interested in the dynamics of social media and self-expression among students.

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## Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore a deep understanding of the influence of Instagram on students' dress styles. Subject selection was carried out by *purposive sampling technique* to obtain relevant informants. Subject criteria include active students aged 18-25 years from three faculties at the University of Bengkulu, namely the Faculty of Law (FH), the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB), and the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP), who have an active Instagram account and often post content related to dress styles. These three faculties were chosen because they do not have special regulations regarding clothing that must be worn, thus giving more freedom to students in expressing their dress style. Data collection was carried out through three main techniques: In-depth interviews, to understand students' perspectives related to dress styles, Participatory observation, to identify visual patterns from content shared by students on Instagram, Documentation studies, including analysis of Instagram uploads relevant to dress styles.

As a theoretical foundation, this study uses the rational choice theory of James Coleman, which explains that individuals act rationally in pursuit of personal interests, so that decisions regarding dress styles are the result of careful thinking. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman method, including the collected data was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman method, which consisted of: Data reduction: filtering relevant information to focus on the main findings, data presentation: compiling data in the form of a descriptive narrative, conclusion/verification: drawing conclusions from the patterns found. Data triangulation is carried out to ensure the validity of the research results, involving comparisons between interview, observation, and documentation data.

## Results and Discussions

### The Influence of Instagram as a Source of Fashion Inspiration for Students

In today's digital era, the development of fashion among students of the University of Bengkulu has undergone a significant transformation with the presence of social media, especially Instagram. The platform has not only become a means of entertainment, but has grown to become a major source of information and fashion inspiration influencing the way students dress on a daily basis (Pratamartatama et al., 2024).

The influence of Instagram on student clothing style is not limited to providing visual references, but also shaping the mindset and preferences in choosing clothes. As expressed by one of the speakers: "Of course, because we are entering the digital era, especially now that the digital era can be accessed anywhere... So we certainly know from the fashion and so on from the internet, of course, especially from social media and so on."

The intensity of using Instagram in the context of fashion is further strengthened by the admission of the source who spends up to 70% of his time exploring fashion content on Instagram. The high intensity of use is inseparable from the platform's ability to present a variety of fashion information comprehensively, ranging from the latest trends, mix and match tips, to recommendations for fashion brands and products. This phenomenon shows how Instagram has become a fashion virtual library that provides unlimited access for students to explore and develop their dressing styles.

Instagram has evolved into more than just a photo-sharing platform, it has become a complex and interactive fashion ecosystem for college students. Instagram's various features, such as reels, stories, and feeds, are used to explore and develop a personal dress style. The students showed a diverse and creative pattern in utilizing this platform, ranging from following local and international fashion influencers, saving OOTD (Outfit of The Day) content as a reference, to actively participating in the virtual fashion community through various popular fashion hashtags.

The presence of abundant styling tutorial content and mix and match tips on Instagram also helps students develop a better understanding of fashion. As one of the students expressed: "I look for inspiration mainly from Instagram social media because I myself have been using Instagram since I was in junior high school until now, in addition to looking for inspiration on dressing styles, on Instagram I also look for other things such as food recipes, makeup styles, and hair styling."

This experience was amplified by other speakers who revealed how Instagram helped them understand color combinations, material selection, and styling techniques that fit their personalities. Interestingly, the process of learning fashion through Instagram takes place organically and continuously, where students not only become content consumers but also start to dare to experiment with their own style and even share their fashion inspiration with their followers.

### The Process of Adoption and Adaptation of Fashion Trends by Students

Although exposure to fashion trends on Instagram is massive, college students demonstrate critical ability to adopt the style of dress they see. This adoption process does not occur blindly, but through careful and selective consideration. Students choose a style of dress, taking into account various aspects such as suitability to the body shape, comfort level, socio-cultural context, to the value of practicality in daily life. This is reflected in the student's statement: "For me personally, the way to choose it starts from looking at my posture first, because if the model of the shirt or the model of the outfit does not match my posture, it must not be suitable to be worn... The first is definitely seen by the fit for the posture, the second is comfort, the third is the uniqueness of the clothes."

This selection process is further strengthened by the experience of other speakers who stated that not all fashion trends on Instagram are suitable for everyone, so there needs to be adjustments and modifications. Interestingly, students also consider the sustainability aspects of the style they choose, such as the possibility to mix and match with clothes they already own, as well as suitability with daily activities on campus. This selective approach shows how students have developed maturity in choosing and adapting fashion trends, not only based on popularity alone, but also considering functional and personal aspects.

In the context of economics, students show an interesting dynamic between their desire to follow fashion trends and their financial reality. As a group that still relies on financial support from parents, students face challenges in balancing their fashion passions with budget constraints. This phenomenon gave rise to various adaptive and creative strategies in their financial management. As revealed by Aaron: "If I am a student, right, so I have not worked yet, so for my own income I also do not have it, of course the main income is from my parents... So it's like the term is smart, for example, we can save."

### Student Financial Strategies in Following Fashion Trends

This financial management strategy is not only limited to saving, but also includes smart decisions such as buying clothes when there are discounts, choosing affordable but still stylish brands, and prioritizing the purchase of items that can be combined in various ways. There are also students who are starting to look at the thrifting or *second-hand* market as an alternative to still be able to be stylish but with a more affordable budget. This financial awareness shows how students develop maturity in managing their fashion desires without having to be trapped in excessive consumptive behavior.

### Creativity in Adapting Korean Style by Hijab Students

Trend *Korean style* has become a very significant phenomenon in shaping student fashion preferences, especially among hijab students at the University of Bengkulu. This phenomenon is interesting because it shows how the influence of *Korean style* not only stopped at the consumption of Korean dramas and K-pop, but has transformed into an adaptive dressing style inspiration (Dharma Yoga et al., 2023). Hijab students show extraordinary creativity in adapting styles *Korean style* which tends to be open to versions that are in accordance with local religious and cultural values.

This adaptation can be seen from how students combine elements of *Korean style* such as the use of pastel colors, *layering outfits*, *oversized clothing*, and minimalist accessories in a way of dressing that remains shari'i. For example, using a turtleneck as an inner to cover the neck, combining a long skirt with *an oversized blazer*, or using *loose pants* that are stylish but still modest. Some students are even inspired by certain Korean drama characters, as revealed by one of the informants: "You sometimes wear a robe in the past, it's just that the name is indeed you have often used outer and outer, what do you wear that looks like outer but up to the knees."

This *Korean style adaptation* is not only limited to the selection of clothes, but also includes a more modern and minimalist way of styling the hijab, choosing the right color (*monochrome*), and using accessories inspired by Korean fashion. This transformation shows how students are able to bridge the gap between global trends and the values of locality and religiosity, creating a unique and authentic fusion style. This illustrates how students are not only passively accepting the influence of global fashion, but are active in the process of adaptation and personalization.

### The Psychological and Social Impact of Fashion Trend Adoption on Instagram

The influence of Instagram on the psychological and social aspects of students shows a complex and profound dynamic. The platform not only changes the way college students dress, but it also significantly affects their self-perception and social interactions. When students successfully adopt Instagram-inspired dress styles, especially those with *Korean styles*, they feel a substantial increase in their confidence. As stated by one informant: "With a fashion representation that suits our tastes, we are certainly more confident or confident. It is like adding value to our confidence to appear in public, to communicate and interact."

This increase in confidence is not only limited to physical appearance, but also affects the way students carry themselves in various social contexts, from classroom interactions to campus activities. Some students revealed how their style of dress became a kind of 'armor' or psychological protector that helped them face challenging social situations.

However, this process is not always smooth. Some students experience an 'insecure' phase at the beginning when trying a new style, as one informant expressed: "At first, it was also like that, suppose I also knew it myself. I was also originally insecure, and that difference was also initially insecure. Because it's like people in this area, especially in the campus environment, many people tell me that my fashion is too eco." However, most students manage to get through this phase and actually get appreciation from their environment over time.

The dynamics of social acceptance of the Korean style-inspired style of dress show interesting variations in the context of the campus environment. The process of adapting this style does not always receive a uniform response from the surrounding environment. As expressed by one of the students: "For friends, the environment must have pros and cons because my own style of dress can be said, how about it, it's said that Korean *style* is really not but sometimes I like to wear Korean like a little crop, *pressed body*."

The response to the campus environment tends to be polarized – some give positive appreciation and support, even using the style as inspiration, while others provide a critical view of style choices that are considered too different from the general norm. This phenomenon reflects how fashion is not only a matter of personal taste, but also intersects with the values and social norms that apply in the campus environment. Some students revealed that they initially received skeptical comments or views because their style of dress was considered too 'excessive' or 'inappropriate' for the campus context.

Over time, many have actually begun to appreciate the uniqueness and creativity in this style. This can be seen from the increasing demand for information about outfits and dress styles from friends in the campus environment. This process of social acceptance also shows how fashion can be a medium to change perceptions and create new trends within the campus community, where styles that were initially considered 'too different' are slowly starting to be accepted and even adapted by more students.

The presence of Instagram has fundamentally changed the fashion landscape among students of the University of Bengkulu, creating a new paradigm in the way they understand and express their style of dressing. This platform is not only a window to access global trends, especially *Korean style* that is dominating, but also a catalyst that encourages students to be more exploratory and creative in dressing. Through diverse fashion content, Instagram has opened up students' insights into various possibilities in clothing mix and match, color use, and *styling* techniques that may have been unthinkable before.

However, what is more interesting is how students are not only passive consumers of fashion content on Instagram. They show a high level of selectivity and creativity in adapting the trends they see. This adaptation process involves deep consideration of their fit into their personality, lifestyle, and social context. Students develop critical skills in sorting and selecting fashion elements that suit their personal preferences, while still maintaining the authenticity of their style. As can be seen from various interviews, they do not just blindly follow trends, but make modifications and personalizations that reflect their individual identities.

Students also show intelligence in developing various strategies to overcome emerging challenges, both financially and socially. They develop creative approaches to managing a limited budget, such as buying when there is a discount, choosing reusable items, or looking for more affordable alternatives without sacrificing the desired style. In a social context, they learn to balance the desire to express themselves through fashion with the norms and expectations of the campus environment. What is most impressive is how they managed to maintain the authenticity of their style in the midst of these pressures and challenges, creating a fashion identity that is unique and personal yet relevant to their social context.

### Implications of Rational Choice Theory on Student Fashion Decisions

The above findings can be explained well using the Rational Choice Theory put forward by James Coleman. This theory emphasizes that every individual is a rational actor who considers profit and loss in every decision, including when it comes to fashion. In the context of the influence of Instagram on the dress style of students at the University of Bengkulu, this theory helps explain how students are not just passive followers of fashion trends on Instagram, but act as rational actors in choosing and adapting their dress styles. This can be seen from how students consider various aspects before adopting a style, ranging from conformity with posture, financial considerations, to social acceptance in the campus environment.

As revealed in the interview, students showed rational consideration when it came to balancing the desire to follow the *Korean style* trend with their budget limitations. They develop strategies such as saving, buying at a

discount, or choosing items that can be mixed and matched. This is a form of rational calculation that Coleman explains, in which actors will maximize profits in conditions of limited resources. In addition, the student's decision to maintain authenticity in adopting trends, despite facing social pressure, also reflects the principle of rational choice in which actors consider not only material aspects but also personal values in decision-making.

Coleman's Rational Choice Theory also helps explain how students face social dilemmas in dressing. When they decide to adopt a different style than usual, such as *the Korean style*, they have gone through rational consideration of how the decision will affect their social interactions. Although initially it received *a response in Korean style*. Diverse from different environments, students still choose to maintain their style because the benefits they feel, such as increased confidence and expression of individuality, are considered to outweigh the potential social criticism they may receive.

Based on the results and discussions that have been described, it can be concluded that Instagram has a very significant role in shaping the preferences and dress styles of Bengkulu University students. This platform is not only a source of fashion inspiration, but also encourages students to become rational actors in choosing and adapting their clothing styles, especially in adopting trends. This is reflected in how students make careful considerations regarding the suitability of style with body posture, financial ability, and campus social context before adopting a fashion trend.

Through the perspective of James Coleman's Rational Choice Theory, it can be understood that students do not play the role of passive consumers of fashion trends on Instagram, but rather show critical skills in managing their fashion preferences. They develop a variety of adaptive strategies, from careful financial management to style modifications that suit the social context, while maintaining their personal authenticity. This balance between following trends and maintaining individuality shows how college students have managed to maximize the benefits of Instagram's influence on their dress style, while minimizing potential negative impacts such as consumptive behavior and social pressures.

## Conclusions

This study shows that Instagram has a significant role in shaping the dress style of students of the University of Bengkulu. Students are not only passive consumers of fashion trends, but also rational actors who critically choose and adapt styles that suit their needs, financial capabilities, and social context. They demonstrate creativity in managing fashion preferences, including through adaptive strategies such as trend modification and careful financial management. This study shows that Instagram has a significant influence on the dress style of students of the University of Bengkulu, especially in adapting Korean style trends. Students are not only passive consumers, but also rational actors who consider personal, social, economic, and cultural aspects in choosing a style of dress. This adaptation process reflects students' ability to bridge global influences with local values, creating a unique fashion identity.

However, the study had limitations, such as limited participant coverage and a focus on only one fashion trend. However, this research provides valuable insights into the dynamics between social media, fashion, and the identity of the younger generation.

Recommendations are: 1) For College Students: It is important to remain critical in adopting social media trends, taking into account personal values and social norms so that the style of dress not only follows the trend but also reflects one's identity; 2) For Educational Institutions: It is recommended to hold digital literacy programs and awareness campaigns for an inclusive and sustainable lifestyle, in order to support students' positive self-expression; 3) For Further Research: Future research can expand participants and explore other fashion trends, as well as explore the impact of social media on psychological aspects such as students' confidence and consumptive behavior. With this recommendation, it is hoped that further research can provide more in-depth and relevant insights for various related parties.

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