

The Relationship between Appearance-Contingent Self-Worth and Self-Perception-Based Grooming Habits among Emerging Adult Men

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Abstract

Men's engagement with appearance and grooming has increased alongside changing social norms and the growing acceptance of male self-care. However, research examining the relationship between appearance-contingent self-worth and self-perception-based grooming habits among emerging adult men, particularly in Indonesia, remains limited. This study investigates the relationship between these two constructs. A quantitative correlational design was employed, involving 223 men aged 18–25 years who were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Appearance-Contingent Self-Worth Scale and the Grooming Habits Scale and analyzed using Spearman's rank-order correlation. The findings reveal a positive but statistically non-significant relationship between appearance-contingent self-worth and grooming habits ($\rho = .114, p = .089$). Descriptively, 79.8% of participants reported high appearance-contingent self-worth, whereas 89.2% demonstrated high grooming habits. Thus, although both characteristics were prevalent among participants, greater dependence of self-worth on physical appearance did not necessarily correspond to stronger grooming habits. The study contributes to the literature on male appearance-related behavior by demonstrating that appearance-contingent self-worth alone may not adequately explain grooming practices among emerging adult men. These findings highlight the importance of examining broader psychological and social factors to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of men's grooming behavior.

Keywords: Appearance-Contingent Self-Worth; Emerging Adult Men; Grooming Habits; Male Appearance; Self-Perception

INTRODUCTION

Male grooming has undergone a substantial cultural shift from a practice traditionally associated with basic hygiene to a broader form of appearance management, self-presentation, and personal care. Grooming products once marketed to men were largely limited to shaving products, deodorants, and basic toiletries, reflecting social expectations that positioned extensive appearance care as predominantly feminine (Elsner, 2012). Contemporary practices show a different pattern. Men increasingly engage in skincare, hair care, fragrance use, facial treatments, and other appearance-enhancing practices as part of their everyday routines. This change has been shaped by evolving gender norms, greater exposure to appearance-related content, and the growing visibility of male grooming in digital culture (Diniyah et al., 2023; Hamshaw & Gavin, 2022). The same development is evident in Indonesia, where men have become increasingly engaged with personal-care and grooming products (International, 2026; Jakpat, 2022). These developments suggest that grooming among men is no longer adequately understood only as a matter of cleanliness; it has become part of how men negotiate appearance, social expectations, and perceptions of themselves.

Physical appearance carries social meaning because people are frequently perceived and evaluated through visible characteristics. The classic “what is beautiful is good” phenomenon illustrates how attractiveness may become associated with favorable personal and social attributes, allowing appearance to influence interpersonal judgments beyond physical features themselves (Dion et al., 1972). Contemporary expectations surrounding masculinity have complicated this process. Men are increasingly permitted, and in some social settings expected, to invest in their appearance while still negotiating cultural ideas about what constitutes acceptable masculine behavior (Utami & Demartoto, 2022). Grooming can consequently serve several purposes at once: maintaining cleanliness, increasing attractiveness, managing impressions, enhancing social confidence, and expressing a preferred image of the self. Male appearance practices should therefore be understood not simply as consumption behavior but also as psychologically meaningful activities through which individuals respond to the way they see themselves and anticipate how they may be seen by others.

The psychological meaning of grooming becomes particularly relevant when grooming habits are considered alongside self-perception. Dunton (2015) described grooming habits among emerging adults as recurring appearance-related behaviors involving the use of grooming products and practices that may be associated with positive and negative perceptions of the self. Experimental evidence also indicates that personal grooming can affect how individuals perceive their own bodies, suggesting that grooming rituals have psychological consequences for the person performing them rather than merely altering how that person appears to others (van Paasschen et al., 2015). Grooming habits may range from basic practices required for cleanliness to supplemental and appearance-enhancing activities intended to improve or maintain attractiveness. Such behaviors can provide a sense of comfort and control over appearance, but they may also reflect an individual's concern about whether the physical self corresponds to personally or socially valued standards. Grooming is thus relevant to self-perception because the body being cared for is simultaneously a physical object, a social presentation, and part of the individual's experience of self.

Emerging adulthood provides an important developmental context for examining this relationship. Arnett (2000) characterizes emerging adulthood as a period marked by identity exploration, instability, increasing independence, and continuing negotiation of social roles. Appearance may become particularly salient during this stage because young adults encounter expanding social networks, romantic relationships, higher education or employment environments, and digitally mediated spaces in which physical presentation is readily visible and evaluated. Social media adds another layer to this experience by repeatedly exposing emerging adults to appearance ideals and opportunities for comparison. Recent evidence involving both women and men indicates that appearance-related preoccupation on social media is associated with body surveillance and different forms of body-image striving, with distinctive patterns also occurring among male participants (Brasil et al., 2024). Research in Indonesia similarly shows that body dissatisfaction among early adult men can be associated with social comparison on image-centered social media platforms (Najla & Zulfiana, 2022). These conditions make early adulthood a meaningful period for understanding why appearance management may become personally significant for some men.

One psychological framework that can explain why appearance acquires such importance is the theory of contingencies of self-worth. Crocker et al. (2003) proposed that self-worth does not depend solely on an individual's general level of self-esteem; it can also

fluctuate according to success or failure in domains on which a person has staked personal value. Appearance is one of the domains represented in the Contingencies of Self-Worth framework developed by (Crocker et al., 2003). In the present study, the Appearance-Contingent Self-Worth (ACSW) measure refers to the Indonesian adaptation of the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale conducted by Awali (2025), while the original scale was developed by (Crocker et al., 2003). *Appearance-contingent self-worth* refers to the extent to which an individual's overall evaluation of personal worth depends on feeling physically attractive or meeting valued appearance standards. Individuals with stronger appearance contingency may consequently experience favorable appearance feedback as self-affirming and unfavorable evaluations as more personally threatening. Adams et al. (2017) found that appearance-contingent self-worth was associated with self-objectification, appearance anxiety, and lower self-esteem among women. This perspective suggests that grooming may carry different psychological meanings depending on the extent to which appearance serves as a basis for evaluating one's worth.

Previous studies have provided important evidence regarding the psychological consequences of placing excessive weight on physical appearance, although much of this literature has focused on women. Overstreet & Quinn (2012) showed that domains of contingent self-worth are relevant to appearance concerns, while Stapleton et al. (2017) identified appearance-contingent self-worth as an important mechanism linking self-esteem with body-image-related outcomes among female participants. Bardone-Cone et al. (2017) further demonstrated that appearance-related contingent self-worth can interact with maladaptive perfectionism in predicting disordered eating. Modica (2019) found that appearance-contingent self-worth was also relevant to relationships among appearance comparison, body esteem, and body surveillance in adult women using Facebook. More recent research has continued to connect appearance-contingent self-worth with body image among young people. Sharma et al. (2024), for example, reported a significant relationship between body image and appearance-contingent self-worth among youth aged 18–24 years. Collectively, these findings establish appearance-contingent self-worth as a meaningful psychological construct, yet the evidence remains disproportionately shaped by appearance concerns and outcomes studied in female samples.

Research focusing directly on men has increasingly recognized that male grooming and appearance concerns deserve their own psychological examination rather than being treated as a simple extension of findings about women. Hamshaw & Gavin (2022) found

that men's grooming behaviors were influenced by appearance concerns, social media exposure, sexuality, attraction, and perceived social status, demonstrating that grooming is embedded within a complex network of personal and social meanings. Indonesian studies likewise indicate that changing masculine norms have made cosmetic use and appearance care more acceptable among men (Diniyah et al., 2023; Utami & Demartoto, 2022). Hidayati & Suseno (2025) recently reported that self-concept and reference groups were positively related to cosmetic purchasing decisions among 185 early adult men in Yogyakarta, with reference groups contributing more strongly than self-concept. This finding provides valuable evidence that men's engagement with cosmetics is connected to psychological and social factors. Its focus, however, remains on purchasing decisions rather than recurring grooming behavior or on the extent to which personal worth is contingent upon appearance.

A clear research gap emerges from these bodies of literature. Studies of *appearance-contingent self-worth* have largely examined self-esteem, body image, self-objectification, appearance anxiety, social comparison, or disordered eating, with female samples receiving considerably greater attention (Adams et al., 2017; Bardone-Cone et al., 2017; Modica, 2019; Stapleton et al., 2017). Studies centered on men have established that grooming practices are shaped by appearance concerns and social influences, but they have not sufficiently explained whether the degree to which men base their self-worth on physical appearance is related to their everyday grooming habits (Hamshaw & Gavin, 2022). Indonesian research has begun to document men's skincare, cosmetic use, changing masculinity, body dissatisfaction, and consumer behavior, yet direct empirical examination of the relationship between *appearance-contingent self-worth* and self-perception-based grooming habits among emerging adult men remains limited. The novelty of the present study lies in connecting Crocker et al. (2003) contingencies-of-self-worth perspective with grooming habits understood as appearance-management behaviors related to self-perception (Dunton, 2015; van Paasschen et al., 2015). This integration shifts the discussion from whether men groom themselves toward the psychological meaning that may underlie variations in their grooming behavior.

The present study focuses on emerging adult men and examines grooming as a personal practice situated at the intersection of physical appearance, self-perception, and self-evaluation. This focus is important because greater engagement in grooming is not inherently problematic; caring for one's appearance may represent healthy self-care, confidence, personal expression, or socially appropriate presentation. Psychological concern becomes

more relevant when personal worth depends heavily on achieving or maintaining a desired appearance. Distinguishing these experiences offers a more balanced and human-centered understanding of male grooming without treating appearance care itself as evidence of psychological difficulty. Accordingly, this study aims to determine the relationship between *appearance-contingent self-worth* and self-perception-based *grooming habits* among emerging adult men. The study is expected to extend existing research on contingent self-worth beyond predominantly female and Western samples while providing empirical insight into the psychological meaning of grooming practices among men within the Indonesian social and cultural context.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational research design to examine the relationship between *appearance-contingent self-worth* and self-perception-based *grooming habits* among emerging adult men. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to measure the two psychological constructs numerically and test the strength and direction of their association through statistical analysis (Abdullah et al., 2022; Sugiyono, 2023). The correlational design was selected because no experimental manipulation was introduced; rather, the study examined naturally occurring variations in *appearance-contingent self-worth* and grooming behavior among participants. The target population consisted of emerging adult men, while participants were selected through purposive sampling based on three inclusion criteria: being male, aged 18–25 years, and routinely engaging in personal grooming. The minimum sample size was determined using an a priori statistical power analysis in G*Power version 3.1.9.7 for a bivariate correlation model, with $\alpha = .05$, statistical power of .80, and an expected medium effect size of $\rho = .30$ based on Cohen (1988) criteria. The analysis indicated that at least 84 participants were required.

Data were collected using psychological questionnaires administered both online through Google Forms and directly to eligible participants. Appearance-contingent self-worth was assessed using the five-item Appearance Contingent Self-Worth subscale of the Indonesian version adapted by Awali (2025) from the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale originally developed by Crocker et al. (2003). Responses were rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*), with reverse scoring applied to unfavorable items. *Grooming habits* were measured using an instrument adapted from Dunton

(2015), originally comprising 18 items representing three dimensions: *basic grooming*, *supplemental grooming*, and *enhancing grooming*. The items were developed to capture not only grooming frequency and practices but also participants' self-perceptions associated with grooming, including feelings of confidence, social comfort, personal security, social pressure, and discomfort when grooming practices were absent. The adaptation procedure followed cross-cultural instrument adaptation principles involving *forward translation*, synthesis, *back translation*, expert review, and pretesting to preserve semantic and conceptual equivalence (Beaton et al., 2000). Content validity was further examined through professional judgment. A pilot study involving 69 participants was then conducted before the main data collection. All five ACSW items met the validity criteria, whereas nine of the original 18 grooming items were retained after item analysis. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .719 for the ACSW scale and .930 for the *Grooming Habits* scale, indicating acceptable to excellent internal consistency.

Data collection was conducted after participants received information regarding the purpose of the study, response procedures, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of their responses. Questionnaires were distributed through online platforms, including WhatsApp, TikTok, and Telegram, as well as through direct administration to participants who met the eligibility criteria. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics were first calculated to summarize the distribution of both variables through means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum scores, and score categorization. Preliminary analyses included normality and linearity testing to evaluate the characteristics of the data and the relationship between the variables. Hypothesis testing was subsequently conducted using Spearman's rank-order correlation to determine the direction, strength, and statistical significance of the relationship between *appearance-contingent self-worth* and self-perception-based *grooming habits* among emerging adult men.

RESULTS

1. Participant Characteristics

A total of 223 emerging adult men aged 18–25 years were included in the final analysis. The respondents completed both the *Appearance-Contingent Self-Worth* (ACSW) scale and the self-perception-based *Grooming Habits* scale. Data collection was conducted from May 20 to July 26, 2026, primarily through an online questionnaire distributed via Google

Forms and social media platforms. The age distribution of the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics by Age

Age (years)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
18	29	13.0
19	31	13.9
20	36	16.1
21	15	6.7
22	57	25.6
23	32	14.3
24	10	4.5
25	13	5.8
Total	223	100.0

As shown in Table 1, participants aged 22 years constituted the largest group, accounting for 57 respondents (25.6%), followed by those aged 20 years with 36 respondents (16.1%) and those aged 23 years with 32 respondents (14.3%). Participants aged 24 years represented the smallest age group, with 10 respondents (4.5%). The distribution indicates that the sample covered the full 18–25-year age range specified for emerging adulthood in this study.

2. Descriptive Results of Appearance-Contingent Self-Worth and Grooming Habits

Descriptive analysis was conducted by comparing hypothetical scores with empirical scores for both research variables. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

Variable	Hypothetical				Empirical			
	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Acsww	5	20	12.50	2.50	13	20	16.86	1.493
Grooming Habits	9	45	27.00	6.00	27	45	—	—

Table 2 shows that the empirical mean for ACSW ($M = 16.86$, $SD = 1.493$) was substantially higher than its hypothetical mean of 12.50. This pattern indicates that the respondents generally demonstrated a relatively high tendency to base their evaluation of personal worth on physical appearance. The empirical scores ranged from 13 to 20, showing that none of the respondents obtained scores near the lower end of the theoretical range.

A similar pattern emerged for self-perception-based *Grooming Habits*. The empirical mean ($M = 37.95$, $SD = 3.401$) exceeded the hypothetical mean of 27.00. The observed scores ranged from 27 to 45, indicating that grooming-related behaviors and self-perceptions were generally prominent among the participants. The relatively high empirical means of both variables, however, describe the level of each construct independently and do not by themselves indicate that the two variables are statistically related.

3. Appearance-Contingent Self-Worth Profile

ACSW was represented by two components: positive appearance-based evaluation and negative appearance-based evaluation. Descriptive statistics for these components are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Appearance-Contingent Self-Worth Components

ACSW Component	Hypothetical Mean	Empirical Mean	Empirical SD	Empirical Range
Positive evaluation	10.00	13.43	1.350	9–16
Negative evaluation	2.50	3.43	0.706	1–4

Both dimensions yielded empirical means above their respective hypothetical means. Positive evaluation produced an empirical mean of 13.43, compared with a hypothetical mean of 10.00. This finding suggests that respondents commonly experienced more favorable evaluations of themselves when they perceived their physical appearance as attractive, well maintained, or consistent with their expectations. Negative evaluation also showed a higher empirical mean ($M = 3.43$) than its hypothetical value of 2.50, indicating that an unfavorable perception of appearance could also be accompanied by less favorable self-evaluation among many participants.

The overall ACSW score was subsequently classified into low, moderate, and high categories, as presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Categorization of Appearance-Contingent Self-Worth

Category	Score Criterion	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	$X < 10$	0	0.0
Moderate	$10 \leq X < 15$	45	20.2
High	$X \geq 15$	178	79.8
Total	—	223	100.0

Table 4 demonstrates that 178 respondents (79.8%) were classified in the high ACSW category, while 45 respondents (20.2%) were in the moderate category. No participant was

classified in the low category. The distribution therefore shows that appearance was a salient domain of self-evaluation for the majority of participants.

A similar tendency was observed when the two ACSW components were examined separately. For positive evaluation, 168 respondents (75.3%) were in the high category and 55 (24.7%) were in the moderate category, with no respondent in the low category. For negative evaluation, 120 respondents (53.8%) were classified as high, 100 (44.8%) as moderate, and only 3 respondents (1.3%) as low. These distributions indicate that physical appearance was relevant not only when respondents evaluated themselves positively but also when they experienced unfavorable judgments of their appearance.

4. Self-Perception-Based Grooming Habits

The *Grooming Habits* construct consisted of three aspects: *basic grooming*, *supplemental grooming*, and *enhancing grooming*. The descriptive results for each aspect are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Grooming Habits Dimensions

Grooming Dimension	Hypothetical Mean	Empirical Mean	Empirical SD	Empirical Range
Basic grooming	9.00	12.57	1.609	3–15
Supplemental grooming	9.00	12.69	1.388	8–15
Enhancing grooming	9.00	12.69	1.545	3–15

Table 5 indicates that the empirical mean of every grooming dimension was higher than the corresponding hypothetical mean of 9.00. *Basic grooming* yielded an empirical mean of 12.57, reflecting a strong tendency toward routine practices associated with cleanliness and maintaining a neat appearance. *Supplemental grooming* and *enhancing grooming* each produced a mean of 12.69, suggesting that respondents also engaged considerably in appearance-management activities extending beyond basic personal care.

The categorical distribution provides a more detailed picture. High levels of *basic grooming* were reported by 178 respondents (79.8%), while 42 respondents (18.8%) were in the moderate category and 3 (1.3%) in the low category. *Supplemental grooming* showed the highest proportion of participants in the high category, with 191 respondents (85.7%), followed by 32 respondents (14.3%) in the moderate category and none in the low category. For *enhancing grooming*, 188 respondents (84.3%) were classified as high, 34 (15.2%) as moderate, and 1 respondent (0.4%) as low.

At the overall scale level, the majority of respondents also showed high self-perception-based grooming habits. Of the 223 participants, 199 respondents (89.2%) were in the high category and 24 respondents (10.8%) were in the moderate category. No respondent was classified in the low category. These results indicate that grooming was a prominent part of participants' everyday appearance management and was accompanied, to varying degrees, by self-perceptions associated with confidence, social comfort, and feelings experienced when grooming routines were not performed.

5. Assumption Testing

Before hypothesis testing, the distributional characteristics of the data were examined. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test yielded a significance value below .05 ($p < .001$), indicating that the data did not meet the assumption of normality. A nonparametric correlation procedure was therefore selected for hypothesis testing.

The linearity analysis yielded a *Deviation from Linearity* significance value of .016. Because this value was below .05, the result indicates a statistically significant deviation from a strictly linear relationship. This finding provides further justification for avoiding a parametric Pearson correlation and using a rank-based correlation approach to examine the association between the two variables.

6. Relationship Between Appearance-Contingent Self-Worth and Grooming Habits

The main hypothesis was tested using Spearman's rank-order correlation. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Spearman Correlation Between Appearance-Contingent Self-Worth and Grooming Habits

Variables	Spearman's ρ	p (2-tailed)	Interpretation
ACSW and Grooming Habits	.114	.089	Positive, very weak, not statistically significant

The Spearman correlation analysis yielded a coefficient of $\rho = .114$ with a two-tailed significance value of $p = .089$. The results indicate a positive but statistically non-significant relationship between *appearance-contingent self-worth* and self-perception-based *grooming habits*. Higher ACSW scores tended to be associated with higher grooming scores; however, this relationship did not reach statistical significance. The significance value of .089 exceeded the predetermined threshold of .05. Therefore, the research hypothesis proposing a significant

relationship between *appearance-contingent self-worth* and self-perception-based *grooming habits* among emerging adult men was not supported. This finding indicates that higher levels of appearance-dependent self-worth were not necessarily accompanied by higher levels of grooming habits within the present sample.

This result is particularly noteworthy because both constructs were independently concentrated in the high category. Approximately 79.8% of participants demonstrated high ACSW, while 89.2% demonstrated high overall *Grooming Habits*. Although both variables showed high levels descriptively, their association did not reach statistical significance at the individual level. Emerging adult men may place considerable importance on physical appearance while expressing this concern through various behaviors that are not limited to the grooming practices measured in this study. Conversely, high levels of grooming habits may also be influenced by motivations and factors other than appearance-dependent self-worth. These findings provide an empirical basis for further interpretation of the relationship between the two constructs in the discussion section.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between *appearance-contingent self-worth* and self-perception-based *grooming habits* among emerging adult men. The Spearman correlation yielded a positive coefficient ($\rho = .114$); however, the association did not reach statistical significance ($p = .089$). These findings indicate a positive but statistically non-significant relationship between the two variables. Accordingly, the alternative hypothesis proposing a significant relationship was not supported, while the null hypothesis could not be rejected. This result is noteworthy because both variables were independently concentrated at relatively high levels: 79.8% of participants were categorized as having high *appearance-contingent self-worth*, while 89.2% reported high self-perception-based *grooming habits*. Thus, although both constructs were prominent at the descriptive level, higher appearance-contingent self-worth was not necessarily accompanied by higher grooming habits at the individual level.

The high level of *appearance-contingent self-worth* observed among participants suggests that physical appearance occupied a meaningful place in how many emerging adult men evaluated themselves. This pattern is consistent with the contingencies-of-self-worth framework proposed by Crocker et al. (2003), which explains that self-esteem may fluctuate

depending on success or failure in personally valued domains. When appearance becomes one of these domains, perceiving oneself as attractive or being satisfied with one's appearance may contribute to more favorable self-evaluation, whereas perceiving one's appearance as inadequate may negatively affect feelings of personal worth. The present findings reflect this pattern in both the positive and negative evaluation components. Most respondents reported favorable self-evaluations when they perceived their appearance positively, while a substantial proportion also experienced less favorable self-evaluations when their appearance did not meet their expectations. Appearance therefore appeared to function as a psychologically meaningful source of self-evaluation for many participants, although it was not necessarily the only basis of their self-worth.

Previous research has similarly demonstrated that placing personal worth on appearance is associated with greater attention to and concern about physical presentation. Overstreet & Quinn (2012) found that appearance-based self-worth was associated with greater body surveillance and lower appearance satisfaction, suggesting that individuals who invest more of their self-worth in appearance may monitor their bodies more closely. Adams et al. (2017) also reported that *appearance-contingent self-worth* was related to greater self-objectification and appearance anxiety, which were subsequently associated with lower self-esteem. Stapleton et al. (2017) further identified *appearance-contingent self-worth* as part of the psychological processes linking self-esteem with body-image-related avoidance among women. These studies reinforce the psychological relevance of appearance-based self-worth, although they primarily address cognitive and emotional outcomes such as body surveillance, anxiety, satisfaction, and avoidance. The present findings suggest that associations identified for these psychological outcomes cannot necessarily be generalized directly to grooming behavior, particularly among men.

Self-perception-based *grooming habits* were also high among the respondents. In the present study, grooming was not conceptualized solely in terms of the frequency of using personal-care products. Rather, it also reflected how participants perceived and experienced themselves in relation to grooming, including feelings of confidence, social comfort, social pressure, and uneasiness when preferred grooming practices were not performed. This result is broadly consistent with Dunton (2015) study of 267 college-aged emerging adults, which examined grooming-product use alongside positive and negative self-perceptions and highlighted the role of grooming in the construction of self-perception. Experimental research by van Paasschen et al. (2015) similarly suggests that grooming rituals can influence

self-perceived body image and are relevant not only to how individuals present themselves to others but also to how they experience their own appearance. Taken together, these findings indicate that grooming may carry psychological meaning beyond hygiene or product consumption.

The statistically non-significant relationship found in the present study suggests that grooming should not be understood simply as a behavioral expression of appearance-dependent self-worth. A man may devote considerable attention to skincare, hair care, fragrance use, or other grooming practices because these activities provide comfort, enjoyment, professionalism, social confidence, personal expression, or a sense of preparedness, without necessarily basing his overall personal worth on appearance. Conversely, an individual whose self-worth is highly dependent on appearance may manage his physical presentation through behaviors not fully captured by the grooming scale, such as clothing choices, physical exercise, dietary practices, body modification, social-media presentation, or avoidance of situations perceived as threatening to appearance. Therefore, conceptual similarity between two appearance-related constructs does not necessarily result in a statistically significant direct relationship. The present finding highlights an important distinction between valuing appearance as a basis of personal worth and engaging in behaviors intended to manage or enhance appearance.

Male grooming is also shaped by a broader social context. Hamshaw and Gavin (2022) found that men's grooming practices were associated with several influences, including social-media use, sexuality, perceived attractiveness, social status, and changing media representations of male appearance. Their survey indicated that men with greater social-media use reported more grooming behaviors, while their qualitative findings demonstrated that grooming practices were negotiated through expectations surrounding attraction, social status, and masculine identity. Such evidence may help explain why the association between *appearance-contingent self-worth* and grooming habits in the present study did not reach statistical significance. Grooming among emerging adult men may be influenced by multiple psychological, interpersonal, cultural, and practical factors rather than by *appearance-contingent self-worth* alone. This explanation is particularly relevant within the Indonesian context, where male grooming is becoming increasingly visible while norms surrounding masculinity, self-care, and acceptable appearance management continue to evolve. Consequently, high levels of grooming may coexist with high levels of appearance-

based self-worth without the two constructs necessarily varying together in a statistically significant manner.

The present findings also differ from previous studies that reported significant associations between *appearance-contingent self-worth* and other appearance-related psychological outcomes. Adams et al. (2017), for example, predominantly examined female samples and focused on outcomes such as self-objectification, body surveillance, appearance anxiety, body satisfaction, and body-image avoidance. In contrast, the present study focused specifically on emerging adult men and conceptualized grooming as both a behavioral and self-perceptual construct. Differences in participant characteristics and the outcomes examined may help explain why the relationship identified in the present study did not reach statistical significance. Rather than contradicting the contingencies-of-self-worth framework, this finding suggests that the consequences of appearance-based self-worth may vary according to gendered experiences and according to whether the outcome examined is cognitive, affective, or behavioral. Future research may therefore benefit from examining body surveillance, appearance anxiety, social comparison, or body satisfaction as potential mediating processes between appearance-based self-worth and grooming behavior rather than assuming a simple direct relationship.

Theoretically, these findings contribute to the literature by demonstrating that *appearance-contingent self-worth* and self-perception-based *grooming habits*, although both related to the broader domain of physical appearance, represent empirically distinct psychological constructs. Appearance may hold considerable importance in an individual's sense of personal worth without necessarily determining the extent of everyday grooming practices. Conversely, grooming may be personally meaningful without indicating that an individual's self-esteem depends on physical attractiveness. This distinction also carries practical implications. Male self-care should not be viewed as psychologically problematic merely because an individual regularly uses grooming products or invests considerable effort in maintaining his appearance. Grooming may represent healthy self-care, personal expression, social preparation, confidence, and enjoyment. Psychological attention may become more relevant when an individual's sense of worth becomes excessively dependent on perceived imperfections, criticism, or failure to meet appearance standards. Psychoeducational efforts may therefore be more beneficial when they encourage emerging adults to develop multiple sources of self-worth, including interpersonal competence, personal values, achievements, relationships, and abilities, rather than discouraging appearance-related self-care.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. Participants were selected through purposive sampling and were limited to men aged 18–25 years who routinely engaged in grooming, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to emerging adult men who engage less frequently in personal care. The concentration of respondents in the high categories of both variables also resulted in relatively restricted score variability, which may reduce the statistical capacity to detect associations between constructs. Both variables were measured through self-report questionnaires, making responses potentially susceptible to social desirability, individual interpretations of grooming practices, and differences in participants' willingness to disclose appearance-related concerns. The cross-sectional correlational design also prevents conclusions regarding temporal or causal relationships. Furthermore, the grooming instrument captured selected basic, supplemental, and enhancing practices alongside self-perceptions but may not represent the full range of appearance-management behaviors practiced by contemporary men. Variables such as social-media exposure, body satisfaction, social comparison, masculinity norms, relationship status, socioeconomic resources, occupation, and motivations for grooming were not controlled. Future studies should therefore involve more heterogeneous samples, incorporate relevant psychological and social variables, and consider mediation or moderation models to explain the conditions under which appearance-based self-worth may be associated with grooming behavior. Longitudinal or mixed-method approaches may also provide a richer understanding of how emerging adult men experience grooming, appearance standards, and personal worth over time.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that physical appearance was psychologically salient for many emerging adult men and that grooming constituted an important component of their self-perception and everyday appearance management. The relationship between these two constructs was positive but did not reach statistical significance in the present sample. This finding encourages a more nuanced understanding of male appearance practices. Caring about one's appearance, engaging in grooming practices, and basing personal worth on physical appearance may coexist, but they should not be treated as interchangeable psychological experiences. Recognizing this distinction allows male grooming to be understood more comprehensively by considering the diverse motives and meanings that emerging adult men attach to caring for and presenting themselves.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that *appearance-contingent self-worth* was not significantly associated with self-perception-based *grooming habits* among emerging adult men. The Spearman correlation showed a very weak positive relationship ($\rho = .114, p = .089$), indicating that higher levels of *appearance-contingent self-worth* tended to be accompanied by slightly higher levels of *grooming habits*, although this tendency was not statistically significant. The findings therefore do not support the proposed hypothesis that *appearance-contingent self-worth* is significantly related to *grooming habits*. At the descriptive level, most participants demonstrated high *appearance-contingent self-worth*, suggesting that physical appearance played an important role in how they evaluated their personal worth. Most participants also reported high self-perception-based *grooming habits*, indicating that grooming practices were closely connected with how they experienced confidence, social comfort, and negative feelings when preferred grooming routines were not performed.

These findings suggest that placing considerable importance on physical appearance does not necessarily determine how strongly emerging adult men engage in or psychologically experience grooming practices. Grooming may be shaped by a broader range of personal and social factors, including self-care motives, social expectations, body image, social comparison, media exposure, and changing norms of masculinity. The study therefore contributes to a more nuanced understanding of male grooming by distinguishing appearance-based self-worth from grooming behavior itself. Future research is recommended to involve more diverse samples, examine additional psychological and social variables, and consider mediating or moderating mechanisms that may better explain how appearance-related self-evaluation becomes translated into grooming practices among emerging adult men.

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