

Street Harassment as Predictor of Self-Esteem Levels on Women Victims in Emerging Adulthood

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Abstract

Introduction: Street harassment phenomenon such as cat-calling, breast-grabbing, and stalking are increasingly occurring in Indonesia. The increasingly widespread phenomenon of street harassment creates a unsecure and discomfort for the community and causes a decrease in level of self-esteem for the victims. **Objective:** This study aims to determine the effect of experience of street harassment on the level of self-esteem in Indonesian women in the emerging adulthood group. **Method:** This study uses a quantitative approach with survey data collection. The participants of this study is 100 female aged 18-25 years old. The measuring instruments used were the 8 item Street Harassment Scale (SHS) that had been modified and the 10 item Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) designed. Data analysis used in this research is simple regression analysis and performed by Jamovi 2.3.21. **Result and Discussion:** As much as 60% of the level of self-esteem in victims of street harassment can be explained by the experience of street harassment ($R^2 = 0,605$). **Conclusions:** From the results of research data analysis, it is known that there is a role of experience of street harassment on the level of self-esteem in women in the young adult age group.

Keywords: Street Harassment; Self-Esteem; Experience of Street Harassment

Introduction

Many acts of sexual harassment occur every day. Indonesian people thinks that sexual harassment are acts of violence that often occur, especially against women, which occur anywhere, either in public or non-public spaces (Neoh and Oktavianti, 2021). According to data recorded by the Online Information System for the Protection of Women and Children, in 2022 there were 7.904 cases of violence of which 79,1% of the victims were women, 89,7% of the perpetrators were men, and 56.4% of the victims were minors and the rest were adults (Kemenpppa, 2022).

The majority of victims of sexual harassment in the workplace and in the educational sphere is women (Santrock, 2019). Sexual harassment that occurs can be physical or verbal, for example acts of rape, deliberately touching another person's body, making sexual insults or jokes, personal questions about sexual life, making sensual actions with hands, facial expressions, sexually directed voices, and others (Paradiaz and Soponyono, 2022). Sexual Harassment Survey in Public Spaces in 2018 was conducted to find out people's assumptions about sexual harassment in public spaces (Change.org Indonesia, 2019). The results of a survey of 62.000 people showed that the most common forms of sexual harassment in public spaces experienced by victims were verbal (60%), physical (24%), and visual (15%) (Change.org Indonesia, 2019).

Verbal forms of sexual harassment in public spaces include comments on bodies, whistling, honking horns, sound of kissing/flying kisses, racist/sexist comments, sexual comments, and being approached continuously. The physical form of sexual harassment in public space is by being touched, blocked, swiped, stalked, peeked at, and photographed. Finally, the visual form of sexual harassment in public space is eyes flirting, vulgar gestures, showing masturbation and showing genitals. Fairchild and Rudman (2008) argue that street harassment is unwanted sexual attention because it involves objective sexual behavior towards women at the individual level (Carretta and Szymanski, 2020).

According to a study conducted by Social Weather Stations (SWS), as many as 60% of women are victims of sexual harassment in public places at least once in their lives and most of them choose not to do anything (Manalo et al., 2016). The biggest reason why they do nothing after experiencing the harassment is because they are afraid to risk their lives to fight back (Manalo et al., 2016).

Previous researchers described street harassment as violating women's rights to walk in public areas without being disturbed and without being constantly reminded about the position and privileges of men (Paludi and Denmark, 2010). The public's opinion regarding street harassment is that they think that it is annoying but not a big problem, because people think that it is just "boys being boys" (Sullivan et al., 2010).

Even though street harassment is a common phenomenon experienced by many women, this phenomenon is often underestimated and ignored by society and makes it "not seen as a social problem" (Carretta and Szymanski, 2020). In fact, many victims of street harassment are blamed because they are considered to 'invite' the acts of

harassment under the pretext of “*Definitely wear sexy clothes*” or “*So don't walk alone at night*” (Kurniawati, 2018).

In fact, all of this can be rejected by the survey results which clearly show that even veiled (hijab) women are often harassed, even during the day (Change.org Indonesia, 2019). Verbal sexual harassment is the most common form of street harassment where the perpetrator and victim do not know each other (Sullivan et al., 2010). Cat-call is an act in the form of loud whistling or comments of a sexual done by a man to a woman who is walk passing by them (Fisher et al., 2019). For examples are things like “*Hello, baby*”, “*Hey beautiful*”, “*Where are you going, sis?*”, “*Alone, sis?*”, “*How sweet*”, “*Smile a little please*”, “*Tease us, girls*”, “*Where are you going so sexy?*”, “*Let me go with you*”, and so on. Even women who wear closed clothes and veil (hijab) are also victims of cat-calling with sayings such as “*Assalamualaikum, Miss, where are you going?*”, “*Lady, do you want to go to the mosque?*” (Kurniawati, 2018).

According to research conducted by Gennaro and Ritschel in 2019, cat-calls are a distorted compliment and a sign that there is bad gender inequality (di Gennaro and Ritschel, 2019). Street harassment in the form of whistling, calls like “*darling*”, “*handsome*” or “*beautiful*” and disturbing verbal comments made by strangers can be classified as cat-calling which constitutes street harassment, making sexual comments at passers-by, following them and forcing themselves to engage in conversation or make racial insults while they are on the street (Dewi, 2019).

The phenomenon of breast-grabbing (begal payudara) is currently booming in Indonesia news (Ong, 2021). Some examples of cases of breast-grabbing in Indonesia occurred in Purworejo Regency, Central Java, where the perpetrator worked as a martabak seller and he carried out the action at night after work with the motive of not being able to hold his lust and had done breast-grabbing act for seven times (Ong, 2021). In Ponorogo, East Java, there was also an act of breast-grabbing and the perpetrator was a 14-year-old junior high school student where he carried out the action while riding a motorcycle (Ong, 2021).

Then there was also a case in Tasikmalaya, West Java which worried the residents because the perpetrator carried out the act of breasts-grabbing and throwing sperm at several parts of the victim's body (Fushshilat and Apsari, 2020). Apart from being referred to as breast-grabbing, this phenomenon is also referred to as sex robbery by the public because it is in the category of deprivation of one's self-esteem because parts of their body are grabbed and touched (Ong, 2021). Women are the objects of this phenomenon while men are the perpetrators. The distinctive feature of the breast-grabbing phenomenon is that the victims and perpetrators do not know each other and the ages of the victims and perpetrators vary (Ong, 2021). The perpetrator admitted that his motive for doing the act was for personal satisfaction (Fushshilat and Apsari, 2020). However, there are also perpetrators who admit that they are just doing it for fun (Ong, 2021).

The experience of street harassment is that women experience direct negative consequences as targets of prejudice and are treated as bodies (or collections of body parts) that are valued for consumption by others (Manalo et al., 2016). Several forms of

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street harassment that victims may experience can cause a decrease in their sense of security, cause discomfort, limited movement in public spaces, cause embarrassment and insecurity, and can disrupt mental stability (Qila et al., 2021). Street harassment can generate an emotional response from the victim which includes privacy disturbance and fear of rape (Bowman, 1993). Then, the experience of street harassment also causes embarrassment, lack of self-confidence and a feeling of not accepting physical conditions, as well as a feeling that one's appearance is wrong so that the desire to change one's appearance will increase (Dewi, 2019).

Changing appearance can be done by wearing loose/oversize clothes so that the butt or chest don't look big, trying hard to reduce the butt and chest by exercising, diet or even surgery (Manalo et al., 2016). Street harassment also creates social effects in the form of fear and distrust of men, making it more difficult for women to meet and trust men (Lord, 2009). Alexander (2007) said that negative life experiences such as constant criticism, physical and verbal abuse and inappropriate comments can reduce self-esteem (Malik et al., 2014).

According to Coopersmith (1967), self-esteem is an evaluation made by a person against himself and is usually an interpretation that someone receives from their environment in the form of appreciation, acceptance and treatment they receive (Putri et al., 2022). Rosenberg and Owens stated that individuals who have high self-esteem show themselves as individuals with the characteristics of being satisfied and proud of themselves, ignoring negative feedback, accepting negative experiences and trying to improve themselves, having positive emotions, being brave, being able to interact with others, dare to take risks, be positive towards others, and think well of yourself (Mruk, 2013).

Whereas individuals who have a low level of self-esteem show dissatisfied behavior with themselves, have a desire to be in other people's positions, reject criticism and view events that occur in life as bad things, do not dare to take risks, tend to experience social anxiety, have negative emotions, and have negative attitudes towards other people (Mruk, 2013). Kernis (2003) also stated that negative thinking patterns and "overgeneralizing" a negative experience are also characteristics of individuals with low self-esteem (Guindon, 2010). Harter (1999) stated that a decrease in self-esteem during youth can affect both sexes, but women show a more drastic decrease than men, especially in the domain of self-esteem related to physical appearance satisfaction. Donnellan et al. (2008) reported that the average level of self-esteem increased from adolescence to early adulthood with males experiencing a higher increase than females.

Jeffrey Arnett (2006) summed up five characteristics of emerging adulthood, namely identity exploration, instability, self-focus (there is a lot of autonomy in carrying out one's own life), feelings-in-between adolescents and adults, and the era of possibilities (Santrock, 2019). At the age of 18-25, individuals have time to focus on themselves but this focus also coexists with low social support and the emergence of depression in individuals (Ikhsani, 2020). Arnett, Zukauskienė & Sugimaru (2014) stated that emerging adults have a lot of autonomy to determine their own lives and deal with life's

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problems, but they also experience a feeling-in-between where they have to be more mature but they also feel they are still teenagers so that this can create a feeling of depressed and worried about themselves. Gorbett & Kruzek (2008) stated that emerging adulthood for women is the time when women explore identity (especially love, career, and worldviews) so that they need a sense of connection or interaction with other people (Guindon, 2010). Sanchez and Kwang (2007) stated that the many interactions with other people (building relationships, working) in their lives make emerging adult women vulnerable to unpleasant and unwanted interactions so that this can have a negative impact on the self-concept and self-esteem of early adult women (Guindon, 2010).

Guindon (2010) stated that the forms of interaction carried out by early adult women vary, can be positive or negative interactions. Receiving negative feedback from others can result in lower self-esteem, and can reinforce existing negative self-esteem (Guindon, 2010). Early adulthood women may experience unwanted interactions, overt or covert sexism and unwanted sexual attention (Guindon, 2010). According to research conducted by the American Association of University Women in 2006, as many as 62% of female students had experienced sexual harassment, most of which took the form of rude jokes, bad comments, and sensual gestures at the target and a small proportion of female students experienced physical sexual harassment (Santrock, 2019). In a study conducted by Yasmine Jackson (2015) it was reported that 6 out of 10 of her research respondents experienced a decrease in self-esteem after becoming victims of street harassment and respondents also reported that the perpetrators made fun of their appearance (Manalo et al., 2016).

Based on the street harassment theory expressed by Lord (2009), the researcher conducted interviews with several street harassment victims around the researcher. The researcher found several impacts on street harassment victims who are five emerging adulthood women (MN, FR, AB, NT, D). MN experienced an incident where he was stared at from head to toe and being taken a video/picture while on the train. After the incident, MN felt insecure about the way she dressed, felt that she was not beautiful and that she had nothing to be proud of herself. FR is a 22-year-old woman who reported her experience of being a victim of breast-grabbing while riding a motorcycle on her way home. After experiencing this incident, FR became insecure about the way he dressed and looked. FR is also trying to change his body shape by dieting.

AB often becomes a victim of cat-calling when she is walking to and from campus. AB reported that after he experienced this, she became less confident, withdrew from the environment and often had negative thoughts. NT is a woman who works after graduating from vocational high school. NT reported that she had been shown the vital organs of a man she did not recognize while on the street. After this incident, NT became a closed person, dissatisfied and had difficulty trusting men. D is an 18 year old female who reported the experience of being followed and asked for her number, and being touched by an unknown man while walking. D stated that she became frequently scared, alert and overthinking after the incident. The results of these interviews became the basis for the researchers' thoughts regarding the experience of street harassment which affected the

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level of self-esteem among victims of the emerging adult female age group. It can be concluded from the results of the interviews that the five respondents showed individual characteristics with low self-esteem after becoming victims of street harassment. Then, referring to previous research conducted by Malik, et al. (2014) conducted on 120 female training nurses aged 18-25, revealed that sexual harassment was a significant predictor of low self-esteem and low job satisfaction among trained female nurse (Malik et al., 2014).

Research conducted by Manalo, et al. (2016) on 400 female students in Manila who had experienced street harassment revealed that this experience resulted in reduced self-confidence and self-esteem of women resulting in female students becoming more aware of their physical appearance and would feel less than someone whenever someone attacked them through street harassment (Manalo et al., 2016). Manalo et al. (2016) also stated that 80% of victims of sexual harassment in public spaces were women aged 18-24 years. The results of research conducted by Kurniawati (2018) also revealed that the experience of verbal sexual harassment in public places acts as a predictor of self-esteem in female college students (Kurniawati, 2018).

Method

This study uses a quantitative approach and using survey method. Participants in this study were women in the emerging adulthood age group (18-25 years) who had experience of street harassment. The number of participants in this study was 100 ($M_{age} = 21,41$; $SD_{age} = 2,099$; 100% female) with majority participants being 21 years old (20,2%).

The sampling technique in this study used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is used in situations where a researcher uses judgment in selecting cases with a specific goal in mind (Neuman, 2004). The researcher determining the number of samples using G*Power calculation version 3.1.9.2 ($r = 0,16$; $\alpha = 0,05$; $1-\beta = 95\%$) and it was found that the sample required in this study was at least 82 respondents. Participants were asked to fill out informed consent before filling out a questionnaire to state their availability to participate in the study.

To analyze the hypothesis, the method used is a simple regression analysis. Simple regression analysis allows researchers to analyze the effect of research with a number of predictors of one. Data collection uses an online questionnaire via Google Form which is distributed on social media to reach participants.

Result and Discussion

Result

The subjects in this study were women in the emerging adulthood age group (18-25 years old) who had been victims of street harassment in Indonesia. The data that was successfully collected through Google Form was 100 respondents. Following are the details of the respondents in this study.

Table 1

Subject Characteristics by Age

Age	Total	Percentage	Total
18	9	8,5%	8,5%
19	8	7,4%	15,9%
20	18	18,1%	34%
21	20	20,2%	54,2%
22	15	16%	70,2%
23	8	8,5%	78,7%
24	12	11,7%	90,4%
25	10	9,6%	100,0%

Based on the table above, it is known that the age distribution of the research respondents varied from 18-25 years of age. The most dominant age of the respondents was at the age of 21 years, which reached 20.2% of the total respondents and the age with the fewest respondents was 19 years of age with a percentage of reaching 7.4% of all respondents.

Tabel 2

Data Categorization of Variable X and Y

<i>Experience of Street Harassment</i>	<i>Self-Esteem</i>	Total	Precentage (%)	Total (%)
Low	High	11	11%	11%
Low	Medium	6	6%	17%
Medium	High	14	14%	31%
Medium	Medium	40	40%	71%
Medium	Low	8	8%	79%
High	Medium	10	10%	89%
High	Low	11	11%	100%

Based on the table above, it is known that respondents with moderate experience of street harassment with moderate levels of self-esteem have the highest number, namely 40% of the total. Then, it is also known that respondents with experience of street harassment in the low category with moderate levels of self-esteem have the smallest number, namely 6% of the total respondents.

The assumption test must be met before the hypothesis analysis can be carried out. The assumption tests that must be fulfilled are the normality test, linearity test, outliers detection, and homogeneity test. The normality test was carried out using the Shapiro-Wilk test and obtained a significance value of experience of street harassment and self-esteem of 0,183 ($p > 0,05$). The linearity test was carried out by looking at the results of the F test and a significance value of $p < 0,001$ was obtained, which means that the data is linear. Then, outliers detection is also performed to detect whether the outliers can be ignored or not. The results of the Cook's Distance test show a mean < 1 ($M = 0.009$) so that the outliers can be ignored. Finally, the homogeneity test was carried out by looking at the scatterplot and it was found that the residuals spread evenly and randomly closer to the value 0 so that the residuals fulfill the homoscedasticity assumption.

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Simple linear regression analysis was performed with the aim of determining the effect of experience of street harassment on self-esteem variables. Simple regression analysis allows researchers to analyze the effect of research with a number of predictors of one. Simple regression analysis can be used to analyze how experience of street harassment can affect self-esteem, also predict the value of the self-esteem variable based on the value of the experience of street harassment variable. Below are the results of a simple regression test using the Jamovi software version 2.3.21.

Tabel 3

Model Fit Measures

Model	R	R ²	Overall Model Test			
			F	df1	df2	p
1	0.778	0.605	150.410	1	98	<.001

In the Model Fit Measure table above, you can see Model 1 (because there is only one predictor) and it can be concluded that the variance of the experience of street harassment predictor has an R^2 value of 0,605, which means an overlap of 60% with the output variable. That is, 60% of the amount of self-esteem can be explained by the experience of street harassment, while the rest (40%) is caused by other factors beyond the experience of street harassment. Therefore, the results show that the regression model is statistically significant which explains 60% of the variance of self-esteem levels ($F(1, 98) = 150,410, p < 0,001, R^2 = 0,605$).

Tabel 4

F Tests Omnibus Anova Test

	Total of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Experience of Street Harassment	3169.934	1	3169.934	150.410	<.001
Residuals	2065.376	98	21.075		

From Table 4, can be seen F regression of experience of street harassment is worth 150,410 and a significance value of $p < 0.001$, which means that there is an influence from experience of street harassment on the level of self-esteem. Therefore, it can be concluded that the experience of street harassment has an influence on the level of self-esteem in emerging adult women so that the research hypothesis is accepted. Then, the residual value shows that there are many other variables that also correlate with the level of self-esteem besides experience of street harassment which in this study were not examined by researchers.

Table 5

Model Coefficients – Self Esteem

Predictor	Estimate	SE	p	SE	95% Confident Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Intercept	40.9	1.44	<.001			
Experience of Street Harassment	-0.93	0.076	<.001	-0.79	-0.904	-0.652

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From the Model Coefficients table above, it can be ascertained that a significantly higher experience of street harassment predicts a lower level of self-esteem ($b = -0,93$, 95% $CI [-0,90, -0,65]$, $\beta = -0,77$, $p < 0,001$). The Model Coefficients table above is also used by researchers to create a regression line equation. The Estimate value indicates the intercept and the X coefficient (experience of street harassment). The following is the regression line equation.

Table 6	
Regression Line Equation	
Regression Line Equation	$Self-Esteem Levels = 40,9 - 0,93 * Experience of Street Harassment + error$

Discussion

Based on the results of this study, it shows that there is a role for street harassment to the level of self-esteem in women victims in the emerging adulthood age group and it needs to be underlined that this research is aimed at respondents who have experienced the phenomenon of street harassment in the last 6 months to 1 year before filling out the questionnaire. This can be proven from the results of the F Omnibus ANOVA analysis test and the Model Coefficients test which show that the result of p is $< 0,001$, which means that there is a relationship between the predictor variable and the output variable. In addition, from the results of hypothesis testing using simple regression analysis, the $R Square$ result is 0,605, which means that there is an overlap of 60% with the output variable. It means that 60% of the amount of self-esteem can be explained by the experience of street harassment, while the rest 940%) is caused by other factors beyond the experience of street harassment. Com (2014) stated that the other factors are negative self-talk, education level, comparing oneself with those who are not compatible, wrong attitudes, body image and the environment (besides the phenomenon of street harassment) which are not examined by the researcher (Manalo et al., 2016).

The results of this study are consistent with previous research conducted by Malik et al. (2014) on 120 training nurses with the characteristics of being female and aged 18-25, revealed that sexual harassment was a significant predictor of low self-esteem ($F(1, 119) = 4,70$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0,30$) and lower job satisfaction ($F(1, 119) = 5,02$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0,36$) among trained female nurses (Malik et al., 2014). Then, according to research conducted by Manalo, et al. (2016) which was conducted on 400 female students in Manila who had experienced street harassment revealed that this experience resulted in reduced self-confidence and self-esteem of women resulting in female students becoming more aware of their physical appearance and would feel less than someone whenever someone attacked them through the street harassment (Manalo et al., 2016).

Furthermore, according to research conducted by Lord (2009) it shows that street harassment is significantly related to self-esteem, avoidance behavior, body image and self-objectification, but has the highest correlation level with self-esteem levels. Then, according to the results of research conducted by Kurniawati (2018) also revealed that the

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experience of verbal sexual harassment in public places acts as a predictor of self-esteem in women (Kurniawati, 2018).

The experience of street harassment has a significant effect on the self-esteem level of women in the emerging adult age group, proving Collier's (1998) statement that the psychological impact of the phenomenon of sexual harassment itself depends on the frequency of the phenomenon, how severe the phenomenon is, and how the phenomenon insults dignity and value. the victim, physically threatening the victim, and how disturbing this phenomenon is for the victim himself (Kurniawati, 2018).

Based on research conducted by Dewi (2019), 92% of the public have experienced and witnessed the phenomenon of street harassment in the form of verbal comments, honking, whistles/sounds of kisses and glances/looks that make them feel uncomfortable. The study also stated that the majority of respondents (80%) stated that the phenomenon was not a compliment or a joke, and the rest thought that the phenomenon was a compliment or a joke (19,3%). If it was concluded, many Indonesian people know and are aware the phenomenon of street harassment is a form of sexual harassment.

The research described above can be related to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. Maslow's theory of needs explains that the need for esteem and respect (esteem needs) is at the fourth level where these needs play a role in the motivation of behavior (Cherry, 2022). Manalo et al. (2016) research states that the need for appreciation from others is clearly influenced by the experience of street harassment which makes victims feel unappreciated and acknowledged in ways they don't want (Manalo et al., 2016).

The perpetrators of street harassment may want to show their admiration or amazement towards the victim, but the victim considers it wrong and they doesn't want to be admired in that way because it makes the victim feel humiliated. Individuals who achieve good self-esteem tend to feel confident, whereas those who lack self-esteem and respect from others can develop feelings of inferiority (Cherry, 2022). Experience of street harassment can make women lose this confidence and respect, causing them to tend to hide themselves from others.

The results of this study concluded that within a period of 6 months to a year the respondents had experienced the phenomenon of street harassment at least once. Exploitation of presence is the most common form of street harassment experienced by respondents (62,09%), even almost two times that of street remarks and access information intrusion when added together. Respondents experienced more incidents where they were looked at from head to toe until they felt uncomfortable, teased with whistling, shown seductive and sensual movements, the perpetrator's vital organs were shown and their body was touched without permission. And what is most often experienced is being teased with whistling and being looked at until you feel uncomfortable. Then, followed by the experience of street harassment type of street remarks (28,67%) where respondents experienced receiving sexual innuendo and evaluatively assessed the respondent.

The results of this study are also in line with the results of research conducted by (Manalo et al., 2016) that forms of street harassment that have the highest frequency of

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occurrences are catcalling, whistling, and eye winking (Manalo et al., 2016). Research conducted by (Lord, 2009) also proved that all of his research respondents had experienced at least two forms of street harassment behavior (Lord, 2009). His research also states that the most common forms of street harassment they experience are whistling, stalking (on foot or in the vehicle), touching, being looked at, and honking the horn intentionally and unintentionally (Lord, 2009).

The categorization of research data shows that respondents with moderate experience of street harassment and moderate levels of self-esteem have the highest total number, namely 40 respondents. Then, the results of the study also show that there are 17 respondents with low experience of street harassment and high and moderate levels of self-esteem, and vice versa. There are 21 respondents with high experience of street harassment and low and moderate levels of self-esteem.

However, there were also respondents with moderate experience of street harassment and a high level of self-esteem, namely 14 respondents. From these results, it can be proven that each respondent's personal emotional response to the phenomenon that befell him can be associated with self-esteem. In line with research conducted by Manalo et al., 2016 that a negative emotional response to the experience of street harassment can give effect to lower level of victim self-esteem. The experience of women being sexually objectified makes women more aware of and worried about their appearance, causing shame and a lowered level of self-esteem, and feeling useless (Manalo et al., 2016).

Conclusion

Street harassment is a phenomenon of verbal and non-verbal harassment that occurs in public or semi-public places and usually has a sexual component including staring, caressing, stalking and throwing vulgar remarks that are likely to demean the victim, objectify or threaten. While self-esteem is an attitude towards a particular object, namely self. Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that the experience of street harassment affects the level of self-esteem in women in the emerging adult age group. The results of the hypothesis test prove that 60% of the amount of self-esteem can be explained by street harassment, while the rest (40%) is caused by other factors outside street harassment ($R^2 = 0.605$).

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