# Perceived influence of self-perception on self-esteem among undergraduate students of Kabarak University in Nakuru County, Kenya

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## Abstract
The purpose of this study was to determine perceived influence of self-perception on self-esteem among undergraduate students of Kabarak University, Kenya. The objective of the study was to establish the perceived influence of self-perception on self-esteem among undergraduate students of Kabarak University. The study involved 3rd year undergraduate students, two university counsellors and ten peer counsellors as respondents. Questionnaire was used for undergraduate students, FGD guide for peer counsellors and interview schedule for university counsellors. Reliability and validity of items was established using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. The results of the variable self-esteem yielded 0.705, while body image yielded 0.937. The response rate was 96.39 per cent. The collected data was analysed using percentages, frequencies and means (descriptive statistics) using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results indicated that the majority of the sampled students and staff jointly agreed that self-perception influences self-esteem among undergraduate students of Kabarak University. The study concluded that self-perception has a statistically significant perceived influence on self-esteem among undergraduate students of Kabarak University. Therefore, the study recommends that key stakeholders in counselling department include in the policies and strategies ways on how to address concerns about self-perception and self-esteem. The research data serves to strengthen efforts by university policymakers and management bodies to enhance the counselling departments by coming up with policies and strategies The study recommends increasing awareness of self-perception, helping students appreciate their bodies, feel comfortable in their own skin, and know that there is more to their worth than just physical appearance.

**Key terms**: Influence, self-esteem, self-perception, third years, undergraduate students.

## INTRODUCTION

Human beings have given a lot of importance to the beauty associated with their bodies, thus the term body image. Pooja and Karrak (2020) argue that young grown-ups are worried about their physical appearance undergraduate students included suffer from trying to impress others and themselves with body image. According to a study by Mirror, mirror it posits that we are all obsessed with our appearance than we like to admit. Concerns about appearance is normal and understandable. The study further argues that attractive people have distinct advantages in our society and gives some cases that attractive children are popular with both their teachers and classmates, attractive applicants have a better chance of getting employed and receiving higher salaries, and in court, attractive people are less often found guilty. When found guilty, they receive less severe sentences (Kate, 2019). Many people do many things to improve their body image, including extremes like having plastic surgeries and extreme makeovers in their bid to alter their appearance and personal characteristics in order to impress the public. We are bombarded every day with images of perfection, perfect lives, perfect bodies and perfect children. According to Caradan (2019), young people are the most affected by physical and psychological changes, which influence views of and satisfaction with body image, both of which are key elements in the development of self-esteem and social adjustment among youth (Gatti et al., 2014).

Throughout history, humankind has given a lot of importance to the beauty of the human body; there have been concerns about body image, and the focus is on the weight, skin, shape or size of certain body parts (Brazier, 2020). This is seen in the significant rise in referrals for cosmetic surgery, concerns about unhealthy eating and drugs designed to make men more muscular. For women, slimness is seen as a desirable attribute, which is associated with self-control, elegance, social attractiveness and youth. Women show a preference for an "hourglass" shaped figure with an underweight body mass index and large breasts as well as toned muscle (Grogan, 2016). Studies previously done showed that repeated exposure to thin-idealised media images resulted in greater body dissatisfaction, body anxiety, and lower self-esteem (Ui-Jeen & Jaehee, 2018).

Self refers to a warm sense or feeling that something is "about me" or "about us". It is an "I" that thinks and a "me" that is the content of those thoughts (Leary & Tangney, 2012). The self is a social construct which is formed through our interactions. It is constructed, maintained and changed through our interaction with others (Morf & Koole, 2018). The self is our home base that guides all our actions. Self colours how we interpret the world, the interaction, the partners we choose and how we present ourselves to others. Self is a social product; this is when we learn who we are through our interaction with others, but at the same time, we influence how these others react to us by behaving toward them in certain ways (Morf & Koole, 2018).

Body image is the different perception of one's body, including how it looks, feels, and moves. It is shaped by perception, emotions, and physical sensation and is not static but can change in relation to mood, physical experience and environment (Shetty, 2018). In the same vein, Pelegrini et al. (2014) posit that body image is characterised by one's mental perception of measures, contours, and shapes of the body, as well as parts of it and feelings associated with characteristics. Body image development is very critical for young people. According to Voicu (2014), body image refers to the self-representation of the body psyche in terms of its potential presence and effective expressive in front of other people. The study further points out that body image and self-esteem are the fundamental elements of self-image (Voicu, 2014). The changes that occur channel individuals' attention towards their developing bodies; thus, body image and self-esteem are variables to be studied in this article.

Body image encompasses an individual's body, which is related to self-perceptions and self-attitudes and is linked to self-esteem, interpersonal confidence, eating and exercise behaviours, sexual experiences and emotional stability (Shetty, 2018). Self-perception about appearance is important in the development of self-esteem, especially during the youthful stage. Research has shown that inappropriate perceptions of body image and dissatisfaction can lead to psychic and physical problems among the youth. The society today is grappling with the ever-increasing sense of ideal

body image. Adolescents and young adults try to lose or gain weight to get a perfect body (Virk & Singh, 2020).

Self-esteem entails beliefs and emotions. Self-esteem is viewed as "a feeling of self-appreciation", while ethical and philosophical conventionally view it as "the awareness of the absolute value of one's own personality or dignity". Thus, self-esteem is the feeling of self-appreciation and it is an indispensable emotion for people to adapt to society and live their lives (Hosogi et al., 2012). For the purpose of this study, body image refers to self-perception, self-affection, self-cognition, appearance management behaviours, and self-esteem, which will be a dependent variable of the study.

There is a lot of literature on body image and self-esteem that has been published, but most of these are in the Western world. There are some studies which have been done on the African continent, but many of the studies have focused on HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and early marriages. Studies on body image have been carried out in Kenya; one of the studies was done in the United States International University-Africa (USIU-A), Nairobi. The study analysed the factors that impacted body image dissatisfaction among young adults in Kenya. The results of the study showed that those studied had low levels of both body image consciousness and dissatisfaction (Evelyne et al., 1991). Another study by Waswa (2018) points out that individuals with body image dissatisfaction might affect an individual's eating behaviours, and if the issue is not addressed, then it may affect their self-esteem; hence, academic performance is affected. Nakuru County is not left out in this issue of body image since there are undergraduate students in this county. Yager et al. (2012) point out that government schools and curriculum authorities are increasingly recognising that body image for young adults is a public health issue that warrants attention in learning settings. It is against this background that this study sought to determine the influence of self-perception on self-esteem among undergraduate students of Kabarak University, Nakuru County. Kenya.

Human beings are concerned with their body image. Body image issues affect people of all ages, especially youth and middle-aged adults. Body image is the key issue that affects people of all ages. The most influenced are the young people, including undergraduate students. The media gives the impression that there is a perfect body image, which makes many young people try all possible means to fit into that expectation. Models, the fashion industry and celebrities have put pressure on young people, making them bow to these pressures; this is confirmed by the ever-growing need for the gym, which is trending in Kenya. The main purpose of working out in a gym is to maintain a desirable body image. Females are more conscious of their body image, which is manifested in their dressing style, application of make-up and dieting. Males have not been left out since they are also putting more effort into achieving a positive outlook by engaging in the same routines done by their female counterparts. All these activities are geared toward having a desirable body image as portrayed by the media.

The problem of self-perception, if not addressed, can lead to low self-esteem, which in turn manifests itself in aggressive behaviours, eating disorders, engaging in risky sexual behaviours and even delinquency. Many studies done on body image and self-esteem have been done mostly in the Western world, yet the problem also affects the African continent, Kenya included. Therefore, this study sought to address this gap by investigating the perceived influence of body image on self-esteem among undergraduate students of Kabarak University in Nakuru County, Kenya.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**
Body image is conceptualised as a multidimensional construct, which encompasses a behavioural component involving body-related behaviours, a perceptual component and a cognitive-affective component (Quittkat et al., 2019). It can be characterised by one's mental perception of measures, counters and shapes of the body and parts of it and the feelings associated with characteristics (Pelegrini et al., 2014). Body image concerns affect all people; body dissatisfaction and its consequences are relevant to both men and women of all ages (MacNeill, 2017). Body image is a concept that has been researched in the global arena. Human beings have always been curious about their bodies; much research has been

done on health issues but less on body image. According to Quittkat et al. (2019), the perceptual component of body image involves the perception of body characteristics, which includes the estimation of one's body size or weight. Self-perception means and includes how we perceive ourselves. It is defined by their self-concept, self-knowledge, self-esteem and social self. The perception of self-states that we are all not really self-aware (Dur et al., 2014); it is widely assumed that people have rose-coloured glasses on when they consider their own personality. Many times, our perception of our own personality is that which matches that of our peers. People are not particularly good judges of their own natures. Hosseini & Padhy (2021) posits that the perceptive component of body image involves the identification and estimation of the body, and it indicates the accuracy of the individual's evaluation of their body size, weight, and shape compared to their actual proportions.

Body perception refers to what is seen or recognised about the body on a conscious level (Calogero & Thompson, 2015). Pop (2016) points out that physical appearance is one of the first individual characteristics noticed by others and has an important impact on social interaction. He argues that poor opinions of our bodies cause low self-esteem and self-confidence. In the same vein, another author posits that body image is related to psychological health and happy life, which includes the attitude of an individual toward himself or judgment about self and the ability to feel his or her influence on life (Lama, 2016).

Gallivan (2014) points out that studies on body image show that many adolescents are dissatisfied with their body weight and shape. He further states that over 80 per cent of 10-year-olds are afraid of being fat, and 53 per cent of 13-year-old American girls are unhappy with their bodies. This number grows to 78 per cent by the time girls reach 17 years. This body dissatisfaction affects the adolescent's self-confidence. Savi and Savi (2015) conducted a study among Turkish Adolescents: 164 students, 90 females and 74 males. The results pointed out that adolescents' self-esteem and body image affect their subjective well-being. This agrees with Nnaemka and Agu (2014), who posit that body image contributes to our perception of self in society;

it affects emotions, feelings, self-worth and recognition.

The prevalence of body dissatisfaction in developed countries varies between 35 per cent and 81 per cent in girls and from 16 per cent to 55 per cent in boys. Studies show that younger adults tend to overestimate their bodies. In general, women perceive their bodies as heavier and larger than they actually are; this is likely due to the idealisation of the thin body. On the other hand, men tend to undervalue their body size, probably idealisation of a muscular and larger body (Hosseini & Padhy, 2020).

A study was done to find out the proportion of students dissatisfied with their body image and the associations of various determinants with body image dissatisfaction and self-esteem. The method used was a cross-sectional study done among 125 first-year medical students in rural Haryana. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The results showed that body image dissatisfaction was present among 16.8 per cent of the students. Low self-esteem was observed among 21.6 per cent of the students. Low body mass index (<18.5) was found to be significantly related to body image dissatisfaction. A moderately positive correlation (r=0.384, p<0.001) was observed between self-esteem and body image satisfaction (Virk & Sing, 2020).

A study was done to assess the level of agreement between body size self-perception and actual body size determined by body mass index (BMI) Z-score and body fatness measured by the deuterium dilution method (DDM) in South African children aged 6-8 years. A sample of 202 children was taken. The results showed that out of the 202 children, 32.2 per cent, 55.1 per cent, 8.8 per cent and 2.4 per cent perceived their body size as underweight, normal and obese, respectively (Moeng-Mahlangu et al., 2020). The study was done on young children, but this study was focused on the perceived influence of self-perception on self-esteem among undergraduate students of Kabarak University, Nakuru County, Kenya. The study sought to establish the perceived influence of self-perception on self-esteem among undergraduate students of Kabarak University in Nakuru County, Kenya.

This study was guided by two theories: psychosocial theory by Erik Erikson and cognitive behavioural theory by Aaron Beck.

The study was guided by psychosocial theory by Erik Erikson, whose focus was on the ways that people are shaped by and react to their social environment. This theory helped the researcher understand and explain the developmental stages that human beings go through. Each developmental stage is crucial in influencing how we grow. Thus, it contributes much to how we respond to various issues in life, which include body image and self-esteem. This theory was relevant to this study in that it focuses on stages of development, stage six, which is about Intimacy and Isolation. The stage covers the period of early adulthood, where people are exploring personal relationships. Success leads to the building of strong relationships, while failure results in aloneness and isolation. Erikson believed that a strong sense of personal identity was important for the development of intimate relationships. Poor sense of self seem to have less committed relationships and are more likely to have emotional isolation, loneliness and depression.

Cognitive Behavioural Theory by Aaron Beck is a short-term goal-oriented therapeutic approach to problem-solving; CBT approaches encourage clients to recognise how what they think and how they behave impact how they feel. CBT assists people to distinguish between problems that can and cannot be resolved and develop better coping skills. CBT has been known to be efficacious in the treatment of conditions from anxiety and depression to pain, low self-esteem and insomnia, and it is helpful across the lifespan, and it is flexible. By changing these thoughts, the behaviour changes, as do emotional responses. This theory was of great help in the study since the respondents were young people who had a distorted cognition of their body image, which in turn was perceived to influence self-esteem and confidence..

## METHODOLOGY
This study used a survey design to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data at one point in time from participating undergraduate students, peer counsellors, and student counsellors at Kabarak University in Nakuru County, Kenya. Therefore, the researcher carried out the study among the undergraduate students of Kabarak University, Nakuru County. Kenya.

The location of the study was Nakuru County, where undergraduate students from Kabarak University within the county were targeted. The target population was undergraduate students at Kabarak University. The target population was 8225. The researcher targeted third-year students because they responded to questionnaires freely and they had already adjusted to university life. Hence, they were the accessible population. The accessible population was 2506. The peer counsellors and university counsellors were sampled because of their experience in offering counselling services to students who may have experienced issues related to body image and self-esteem. Thus, the involvement of undergraduate students, peer counsellors and student counsellors' contributions added value to this study.

The study used simple random sampling to select third-year students. The university counsellors and peer counsellors were selected using purposive sampling. The sample size for third-year students in the study was determined using the formula developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The sample size for an accessible population of 2506 undergraduate students is 333. The researcher used a simple random sampling technique to select the respondents for the study. The researcher interviewed two university counsellors and had ten peer counsellors for the FGD. Thus, the total respondents were 345. The researcher used both questionnaires, Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and Interview Schedule. The researcher adapted the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale for the questionnaire, in which the students were the respondents.

To ensure the reliability of the research instruments, a pilot study was done at Kabarak University-Town campus in Nakuru County was chosen for piloting the research instruments, which was included in the final study. The instruments were tested on 10 undergraduate students, 5 peer counsellors and 1 counsellor. Cronbach's coefficient alpha method was

used to determine the internal consistency of the items. The researcher made sure that the items in the questionnaire covered a range of issues relevant to the study and that the questions were clear as well as suitable for the study. The researcher also consulted with the supervisor to ensure the validity of the instruments.

Reliability was considered acceptable because the items yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.7 and above. After the researcher was cleared by the Kabarak University Institute of Post Graduate Studies for the collection of data, the researcher sought an introduction letter from Kabarak University, which was used to seek a permit from KUREC. The researcher applied to the Kabarak University Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (KUREC) and was cleared. The permit from KUREC was used to apply for a research permit from the National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) to collect data for the study, and the permit was given. The researcher sought a permit from the management of Kabarak University, where the study was conducted, and she was cleared.

The researcher sought a permit from the county commissioner and the Director of Education in Nakuru County, and the permits were given. After getting permission, the researcher engaged assistant researchers to administer questionnaires to the undergraduate students of Kabarak University. The assistant researchers were trained on how to administer the instruments. The respondents were given between two and four days to fill out the questionnaires at their convenience, after which they were collected. Face-to-face focus groups with peer counsellors and interviews with the student counsellors were done by the researcher herself after booking appointments with the peer counsellors and the student counsellors, respectively, participating in the study. During the focused group discussions with the peer counsellors and interviews with the student counsellors, the researcher listened, observed and formed an emphatic alliance with the group and interviewees respectively; remained watchful of themes presented; and resisted any temptation to analyse the meanings of observation prematurely. The data was collected in the month of September 2022.

This data was analysed by obtaining detailed information about the phenomenon being studied and establishing patterns and trends from the information to be gathered (Frankfort, 2006). This also involved giving meaning to the mass information collected by organising the data and creating categories and themes. Descriptive statistics, which include percentages and frequencies, were used to analyse the data. Quantitative data came from the questionnaire filled out by the students and is expressed in numbers and graphs. The researcher analysed data in different categories, beginning with the personal information of the respondents as stated in the questionnaire, focus group discussion guide and in-depth interview schedule. The researcher used codes, which provided a link between the raw data and the conceptual framework. Data was then evaluated and analysed to determine the adequacy of information and its credibility, usefulness and consistency.

Having received these legal documents, the researcher accessed the study participants. In the study, the researcher acknowledged and gave credit to authors whose work was quoted to avoid plagiarism. The researcher considered the anonymity of the subjects of study in that codes were used as follows: peer counsellor was coded Peer Counsellor 1-10, and university counsellors were coded University Counsellor 1 and University Counsellor 2. The researcher sought informed consent from the study respondents and encouraged voluntary participation from the study participants. The raw data collected was anonymous and handled with care and with high confidentiality in order to safeguard the data from leaking sensitive information. The interview and FGD data were entered in a systematic way to reduce data distortion. The data collected has been stored, and a backup system has been installed to ensure no data loss. The raw data was stored in a secure place after the analysis and shall be disposed after the duration of time when the raw data will no longer be required.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The findings were achieved through data collected from undergraduate students, peer counsellors, and

university counsellors at Kabarak University in Nakuru County, Kenya.

The quantitative data was analysed and presented using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The quantitative data were derived from the Likert scale as follows: Rosenberg Self-esteem scale Strongly Disagree (SD) Disagree (D) Neutral (N) Agree (A) Strongly Agree (SA) to measure perception of undergraduate students 'perception on the influence of self-assessed body image on self-esteem among undergraduate student. The Body image Action and acceptance questionnaire also had a Likert scale: (1) Never true (2) Very seldom true (3) Seldom true (4) Sometimes true (5) frequently true (6) Almost true (7) Always true.

The qualitative data were acquired from the in-depth interview schedule for the university counsellors and from the focus group discussion by the peer counsellors. The qualitative data collected were summarised and presented as narrative thematically. The qualitative data served to compliment the quantitative data.The objective of the study was to establish the influence of self-perception on self-esteem among undergraduate Students of Kabarak University in Nakuru County, Kenya.

**Response Rates of the Respondents**

The number of questionnaires administered was three hundred and thirty-three (333), while the number returned was three hundred and twenty-one (321). The researcher obtained a high questionnaire rate of return. The response rate was 96.39%, and the female participants were 163 (50.8%) of the total respondents. The male respondents were 158 (49.2%) of the total respondents. The study, therefore, indicated that there were slightly more female respondents as compared to male respondents.

**The Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

This section discusses the demographic characteristics. The respondents were required to indicate both their age and gender. The information on the age and gender of the respondents was of great importance in that it helped the researcher to obtain the characteristics of the respondents. These characteristics of respondents help readers and researchers understand the findings, know how to generalise the information and know how the information can be compared or replicated in other studies. The study used the frequency and percentage to illustrate the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

**Table 1: Distribution of the Gender of the Respondents**

| Gender | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 163 | 50.8 |
| Male | 158 | 49.2 |
| **Total** | **321** | **100.0** |

From the study results, it was observed that the number of female participants was 163 (50.8%) of the total respondents. The study also indicated that the number of male respondents was 158 (49.2%) of the total respondents. The study, therefore, indicated that there was a larger proportion of female respondents than that of male respondents.

**Table 2: Distribution of Age of the Respondents**

| Age | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|
| below 18 years | 4 | 1.2 |
| 18-19 years | 53 | 16.5 |
| 20-21 years | 142 | 44.2 |
| 22 years and above | 122 | 38.0 |

| Total | 321 | 100.0 |
|---|---|---|

The results of the study indicate that the number of respondents below 18 years was 4 (1.2%) of the total respondents. The study also indicates that the number of respondents between the ages of 18 and 19 was 53 (16.5%) of the total respondents. The results also indicated that the number of respondents between 20-21 years was 142 (44.2%) of the total respondents. Finally, the results indicate that the number of respondents above the age of 22 years was 122 (38%) of the total respondents. The study, therefore, concluded that many respondents were between the ages of 20 and 22 years.

## Overview of Self-esteem Concerns among Undergraduate Students

This section covers an overview of self-esteem concerns among undergraduate students due to the perceived influence of self-assessed body image. It covers undergraduate students' responses to self-esteem concerns that are of self-perception. From the questionnaires, the findings indicated that student self-perception boosts their self-esteem in feeling worth, feeling of having a number of qualities, feeling of failure, feeling they could have more respect towards themselves and feeling not being good at all times.

In addition, qualitative data from peer counsellors and student counsellors on self-esteem concerns among undergraduate students was also included. From the in-depth interview schedule, the university counsellors pointed out that body image affects undergraduate students both positively and negatively that is those who have plus size and undersize are affected. This agreed with what was derived from the opinions of the peer counsellor during the FGD.

*Excerpt one*
*Peer Counsellors' and Student Counsellors' Verbatim Report on body image and self-esteem Some Peer Counsellors' Responses during Focus Group Discussions (FGD)*
***Researcher:*** *What are your beliefs on the influence of body image in your university?*
***Counsellor 1:*** *Body image is a real issue in our university; it affects students positively and negatively. Most of the cases I handle in the department arise because of issues related to body image and self-esteem. The most affected are the ladies because they equate beauty with body image.*
***Counsellor 2:*** *Undergraduate students' belief that obese students are from rich backgrounds who have no time for physical activities and tend to eat starchy and fast food. Some think that the slim/slender come from a poor background.*
***Researcher:*** *In your opinion, how does body image influence self-esteem among your peers?*
***Peer counsellor 1:*** *yes, body image does influence self-esteem some students go through depression in the process of trying to fit in other people's life and wondering if they were like others.*
***Peer counsellor 2:*** *Body image leads to both low self-esteem and over self-esteem. Body image can build or destroy self-esteem depending on an individual's perception. Many undergraduate students struggle to fit into the group.*

The findings of this study were related to the objective and the responses attained from undergraduate students through questionnaires, focused group discussions (FGD) with peer counsellors and interviews with university counsellors. The study findings on the research objective covered aspect of Self-perception which is related to undergraduate students' self-esteem.

**Table 3: Likert Scale of Undergraduate Perception of the Influence of Self-perception on Self-esteem**

| Variable | Categories | Frequency | Percentages | Chi-square | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Strongly disagree | 14 | 4.4 | | |
| | Disagree | 11 | 3.4 | | |
| | Neutral | 27 | 8.4 | | |
| | Agree | 71 | 22.1 | | |
| Self-esteem 1 | Strongly agree | 198 | 61.7 | 518.196 | 0.000 |
| | Strongly disagree | 8 | 2.5 | | |
| | Disagree | 8 | 2.5 | | |
| | Neutral | 21 | 6.5 | | |
| | Agree | 145 | 45.2 | | |
| Self-esteem2 | Strongly agree | 138 | 43 | 314.969 | 0.000 |
| | Strongly disagree | 164 | 51.1 | | |
| | Disagree | 55 | 17.1 | | |
| | Neutral | 25 | 7.8 | | |
| | Agree | 25 | 7.8 | | |
| Self-esteem 3 | Strongly agree | 43 | 13.4 | 217.167 | 0.000 |
| | Strongly disagree | 10 | 3.1 | | |
| | Disagree | 8 | 2.5 | | |
| | Neutral | 36 | 11.2 | | |
| | Agree | 113 | 35.2 | | |
| Self-esteem 4 | Strongly agree | 149 | 46.4 | 260.424 | 0.000 |
| | Strongly disagree | 114 | 35.5 | | |
| | Disagree | 42 | 13.1 | | |
| | Neutral | 33 | 10.3 | | |
| | Agree | 72 | 22.4 | | |
| Self-esteem5 | Strongly agree | 53 | 16.5 | 65.65 | 0.000 |
| | Strongly disagree | 10 | 3.1 | | |
| | Disagree | 8 | 2.5 | | |
| | Neutral | 36 | 11.2 | | |
| | Agree | 83 | 25.9 | | |
| Self-esteem 6 | Strongly agree | 175 | 54.5 | 312.583 | 0.000 |
| | Strongly disagree | 17 | 5.3 | | |
| | Disagree | 22 | 6.9 | | |
| | Neutral | 32 | 10 | | |
| | Agree | 88 | 27.4 | | |
| Self-esteem 7 | Strongly agree | 159 | 49.5 | 229.516 | 0.000 |
| | Strongly disagree | 75 | 23.4 | | |
| | Disagree | 33 | 10.3 | | |
| | Neutral | 35 | 10.9 | | |
| | Agree | 65 | 20.2 | | |
| Self-esteem 8 | Strongly agree | 111 | 34.6 | 67.777 | 0.000 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Strongly disagree | 110 | 34.3 | | |
| | Disagree | 21 | 6.5 | | |
| | Neutral | 48 | 15 | | |
| | Agree | 74 | 23.1 | | |
| Self-esteem 9 | Strongly agree | 66 | 20.6 | 67.787 | |
| | Strongly disagree | 113 | 35.2 | | |
| | Disagree | 45 | 14 | | |
| | Neutral | 34 | 10.6 | | |
| | Agree | 44 | 13.7 | | |
| Self-esteem 10 | Strongly agree | 84 | 26.2 | 69.719 | |

**Table 4: Chi-Square Statistical Tests of Perceived Influence of Self-perception on Self-esteem**

| | selfesteem1 | selfesteem2 | selfesteem3 | selfesteem4 | selfesteem5 | selfesteem6 | selfesteem7 | selfesteem8 | selfesteem9 | selfesteem10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chi-Square | $518.196^a$ | $314.969^b$ | $217.167^c$ | $260.424^d$ | $65.650^e$ | $312.583^c$ | $229.516^f$ | $64.777^g$ | $67.787^g$ | $69.719^b$ |
| Df | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| selfesteem1 | selfesteem2 | selfesteem3 | selfesteem4 | selfesteem5 | selfesteem6 | selfesteem7 | selfesteem8 | selfesteem9 | selfesteem10 | .000 |

Self-perception includes how we perceive ourselves. It is defined by self-concept, self-knowledge, self-esteem and social self. The perceptual component of body image involves the perception of body characteristics, which include the estimation of one's body size or weight. The researcher used the Rosenberg self-esteem scale to measure the respondents' perceived influence of self-perception on self-esteem.

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale is rated as follows: Strongly Disagree (SD) Disagree (D) Neutral (N) Agree (A) Strongly Agree (SA). The undergraduate students were asked to respond to statements about the perceived influence of self-perception on self-esteem. The qualitative data from the focus group discussion with the peer counsellors and the in-depth interview schedule with the university counsellors were used to supplement the quantitative data.

The undergraduate students rated their perception of the perceived influence of self-perception on self-esteem through the following statements. From the results of the study, it was observed that the feeling of the student that "I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others" was significant since the chi-square = 518.196, with p-value=0.000<005 significance level. This implies that the majority of undergraduate students perceive themselves as being worthy. This indicates that the student's self-perception boosts their self-esteem and feelings of worth.

The response rates from the questionnaire showed that the majority of undergraduate students, 145(42.5%) and 198(61.7%), indicated agree and strongly agree, respectively, while those who did not support the statement by indicating strongly disagree and disagree were 8(2.5%) and 8(2.5%) respectively. Those respondents who indicated neutral were 21(6.5%).

Undergraduate students perceive themselves as people of worth and are at least on equal plane with others. Their perception of their worth contributes to their self-esteem. From the psychosocial stages of development by Erik Erikson, stage six of intimacy versus isolation is applicable to undergraduate students in that self-perception influences whether they engage in intimate relationships or become isolated.

The university counsellors pointed out that students with positive perceptions about themselves had high self-esteem, while those with low perceptions had low self-esteem. They further posited that the majority of

undergraduate students feel that they have a certain look in order to fit in society. One of the counsellors mentioned the case of Cultural Week (beauty pageant), which has certain set standards about what ideal beauty should be. This standard contributes to students' self-perception, which in turn affects their self-esteem.

The results indicate that the chi-square value for the student "I feel that I have a number of good qualities" was 314.969 with p-value=0.000<0.05 significance level. This means that there was significant evidence that the student's self-perception influences the student's feeling of having a number of qualities. Most of the students strongly disagreed with the statement 164(51.1%) and 55(17.1%) disagree, those who agreed were 25(7.5%) strongly agree 138(43%) and those who were neutral were 25(7.5%). This means that there was significant evidence that the student's self-perception influences the student's feeling of having a number of qualities.

The results indicate that the feeling of a student "all in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure" had a chi-square = 217.167, with p-value = 0.000<0.05 significance level. This means that there was significant evidence that student perception influences the student self-esteem on feeling of failure. The response rate shows were as follows: Majority of the students strongly disagree 164(51.1%), 8(2.5%) disagree, 43(13.4%) strongly agree, 113(35%) agree, and 25(7.5%) were neutral. From this response rate, it shows that those who are not inclined to the feeling of being a failure are slightly higher than those who are inclined to the feeling of being a failure, and the neutral is a small number. This implies that most students tend to perceive that they are not inclined to the feeling of being a failure. The response on the test scored almost on an equal basis in that those who strongly disagreed were slightly over half.

The researcher used the statement "I am able to do things as well as most other people" to test students' perceived influence of self-perception on self-esteem, and the results indicated that the feeling of the student "I am able to do things as well as most other people" had a chi-square = 260.424, with p-value = 0.000<0.05 significance level. This means that there

was significant evidence that student perception influences the student self-esteem on feeling of doing all things as others can do.

The response rate on the above statement had 149(46.6%) strongly agree, 72(22.4%) agree, 114 (35.5%) strongly disagree, 42(13.1%) and 33(10.3%) neutral. These results concur with what the counsellor pointed out: that most undergraduate students will go the extra mile to do things that will enable them to fit in with the group. The peer counsellors also agree that most of their peers will try all means to fit into the group to prove that they are able to do as their peers are able to do. This agrees with a study done by Nnaemeka and Agu (2014), who point out that body image contributes to the perception of self in society and affects emotions, feelings, self-worth and recognition.

The influence of self-perception on self-esteem was tested using the statement "I feel I do not have much to be proud of". From the results of the study, it was observed that the feeling of the student that "I feel I do not have much to be proud of" was significant since the chi-square = 65.650, with p-value=0.000<005 significance level. This indicates that the student's self-perception influences the student's feeling of not having much to be proud of. The response rate of the undergraduate students indicated that the majority of them strongly agree 53(16.5), agree 83(25.9%), strongly disagree 10(3.1%), disagree 8(2.5 %) and neutral 36(11.2%). The response rate was 59.2(%.) The peer counsellors highlighted that most of their peers are not proud of their bodies while others are proud. They feel that they need to have a particular shape and weight, which will enable them to be proud of themselves, which in turn contributes to their self-esteem.

The findings concur with a study done, which was done to find out the proportion of students dissatisfied with their body image, and the associations of various determinants with body image dissatisfaction and self-esteem. The method used was cross-sectional study done among 125 first years' medical students in rural Haryana. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The results showed that body image dissatisfaction was present

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among 16.8 per cent of the students. Low self-esteem was observed among 21.6 per cent of the students.

Low body mass index was found to be significantly related to body image dissatisfaction. The other statement used to test the perceived influence of self-perception on self-esteem was "I take a positive attitude towards myself". The results indicate that the feeling of the student "I take a positive attitude towards myself" had a chi-square = 229.516, with p-value = 0.000<0.05 significance level. This means that there was significant evidence that student perception influences the student's self-esteem on feeling a positive attitude towards self. The response rate of the statement showed that the majority of the undergraduate students strongly agree 175(54.5%), agree 88(27.4%), strongly disagree 17(5.3%), disagree 22(6.9%) and neutral 32(10%). The peer counsellors pointed out that their peers tend to have negative attitudes towards themselves based on the comments from what their peers say about them. They also argued that others tend to have a positive attitude towards themselves, especially men.

The findings of the study agree with a study done which indicated that the prevalence of body dissatisfaction in developed countries varies between 35 per cent and 81 per cent in girls and from 16 per cent to 55 per cent in boys. Studies show that younger adults tend to overestimate their bodies. In general, women perceive their bodies as heavier and larger than they actually are; this is likely due to the idealisation of the thin body. On the other hand, men tend to undervalue their body size, probably idealisation of a muscular and larger body (Hosseini & Padhy, 2020).

The researcher further used the statement, "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself". The results indicate that the feeling of the student "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself" had a chi-square = 64.777, with p-value = 0.000<0.05 significance level. This means that there was significant evidence that student perception influences the student's self-esteem and the feeling of being satisfied with self. The response rate indicated that majority were satisfied with themselves those who strongly agree 159(49.5%), agree 65(20.2%), strongly disagree 75(23.4%), disagree

33(10.3%) and neutral 35(10.9%). University counsellors opined that most of their clients are not satisfied with their bodies. Those who are underweight feel they need to put on weight, while those who are overweight feel that they need to lose weight. The peer counsellor also concurred with the counsellor by saying that their peers are not satisfied with themselves. One of the peer counsellors said that "*when you appreciate a peer, they do not take the appreciation to be true.*" This implies they perceive themselves lowly, which affects their self-esteem.

The response rate on the test of the statement, "I wish I could have more respect for myself", indicated that the majority of the undergraduate students perceived the need to have more respect for themselves in that those who strongly agree 111(34.6%), agree 74(23.2%), strongly disagree 110(34.3%) disagree 21(6.5%) and neutral 48 (15%). The results indicate that the feeling of the student "I wish I could have more respect for myself" had a chi-square = 67.787, with p-value = 0.000<0.05 significance level. This means that there was significant evidence that student perception influences the student self-esteem on feeling they could have more respect towards themselves.

The researcher used this statement also to test the perceived influence of self-perception on self-esteem: "at times I think I am no good at all". The response rate was 26.2 per cent, who strongly agree that they think that I am not good at all, the results indicated that the feeling of the student "At times I think I am no good at all" had a chi-square = 69.719, with p-value = 0.000<;0.05 significance level. This means that there was significant evidence that student perception influences the student self-esteem on feeling not being good at all times. The results of the study, therefore, imply that self-perception influences self-esteem among undergraduate students. In summary, the research, findings and related literature indicate that there is a significant correlation between self-perception and self-esteem among undergraduate students. The findings indicate that most of the respondents have a strong perception of the self by perceiving that they are a person of worth, have a number of good qualities, have much to be proud of, are not inclined to feel that they are a failure, are able

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to do things as well as most other people, have a positive attitude towards self, are satisfied with themselves and have more respect for themselves. On the same note, they are those with a low perception of themselves.

This information can be useful in devising effective interventions and measures to enhance self-perception in order to enhance self-esteem. Therefore, counsellors, policy makers, and university management should enhance self-perception among undergraduate students in order to enhance their self-esteem.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, self-perception has a statistically significant influence on self-esteem among undergraduate students. The research findings and related literature indicate that there is a significant correlation between self-perception and self-esteem among undergraduate students. The findings show that most of the respondents have a strong perception of the self by perceiving that they are a person of worth, have a number of good qualities, have much to be proud of, are not inclined to feel that they are a failure, are able to do things as well as most other people, have a positive attitude towards self, are satisfied with themselves and have more respect for themselves. On the same note, they are those with a low perception of themselves.

**Recommendations:** Firstly, there should be a deliberate effort by all stakeholders in the university to empower undergraduate students on self-perception in order to help students have positive self-esteem. Secondly, the key stakeholders in the counselling department include in the policies and strategies ways on how to address concerns about self-perception and self-esteem. Thirdly, the study recommends increasing awareness of self-perception, thus helping students to appreciate their bodies, feel comfortable in their own skin, and know that there is more to their worth than just physical appearance. Fourthly, the government of Kenya should enhance censorship of the kind of information being sent or received through social media platforms, especially on distorted body image-related messages and videos, in order to curb self-esteem concerns among undergraduate students. In addition to that, the government of Kenya to regulate the use of cosmetics and beauty products in the market. Lastly, the university to empower the peer counsellors through training about image so that they in turn work hand in hand with the university counsellors to address the concerns about body image and self-esteem among their peers.

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