

Original Article

Body Image in Early Adolescence: The Role of Self-Esteem Among Female Students

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Abstract. Adolescent girls are increasingly exposed to appearance-based social comparison, which may influence their body image. However, research involving junior high school girls remains limited. This study aimed to describe self-esteem and body image and examine the relationship between the two variables among female junior high school students. A quantitative correlational design with total sampling was used, involving 110 female students. Data were collected using validated and reliable self-esteem and body image scales and analyzed using descriptive statistics, prerequisite tests, and Pearson's product-moment correlation. The results showed that most students had high self-esteem (66.4%) and low body image (68.2%). A significant negative correlation was found between self-esteem and body image ($r = -0.602$, $p < .001$). These findings emphasize the importance of guidance and counseling services in strengthening self-esteem and promoting a healthier body image among girls in early adolescence.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Body Image, Junior High School Student, Guidance and Counseling

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Introduction

Body image concerns are increasingly recognized as a significant part of adolescent psychological experience. Adolescence is widely regarded as a critical developmental period marked by heightened vulnerability to body image concerns, eating problems, and related psychological difficulties. The American Psychological Association has noted that adolescents are, at this stage, actively searching for identity and are therefore particularly sensitive to social evaluation and to how their physical appearance is perceived by others. This sensitivity is intensified by extensive digital exposure: adolescents today spend an average of six to eight hours a day in front of a screen, much of it on social media, where they encounter hundreds or even thousands of idealized images of celebrities, beauty influencers, and fitness figures every day (Yuniarti, 2025). Such repeated exposure can foster internalization of unrealistic beauty standards, which in turn heightens dissatisfaction with one's weight and body shape and contributes to the formation of negative body image (American Psychological Association [APA], 2023). A comparable pattern has been observed among Indonesian adolescents who are active users of Instagram, where habitual exposure to curated, appearance-focused content has been linked to self-evaluative tendencies such as narcissistic behavior, indicating that the platforms adolescents rely on daily may shape not only how they view others but also how they come to view themselves (Syahputra et al., 2025).

Concerns about adolescent well-being are also reflected in national data relevant to this developmental period. The Indonesian Ministry of Health (Kemenkes, 2024), citing World

Health Organization figures, reported that one in seven adolescents aged 10-19 years experiences a mental health disorder, while the 2022 Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS) found that approximately 15.5 million adolescents, or 34.9% of Indonesia's adolescent population, face some form of mental health problem. Students at the junior high school (SMP) level, generally aged 13 to 16 years, fall within the early-adolescence category, a phase marked by rapid physical growth alongside increasingly prominent psychological and emotional development, including heightened sensitivity to appearance-related concerns (Azmi et al., 2023).

This phenomenon is also evident within the Indonesian context. Garbett et al. (2023) found that Indonesian girls and young women report considerable social pressure regarding their appearance, particularly concerning body weight and skin tone; many described feeling pressured to be thin and reported disordered eating patterns as a consequence. Some adolescent girls also tended to avoid social situations because they felt insecure about their appearance. A study spanning five Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia, further revealed that more than a quarter of young women wished to undergo cosmetic surgery to change body parts they disliked. However, much of this evidence concentrates on older adolescent girls and young women, leaving the experience of younger, junior-high-school-aged girls comparatively underexplored, even though the phenomenon may well emerge from the very beginning of adolescence.

In line with these findings, Permatasari et al. (2025) reported that 76 of 148 adolescent respondents (51.4%) exhibited negative body image, meaning that more than half of the female adolescents in their sample felt dissatisfied with their body shape, embarrassed, lacking confidence about their appearance, and unable to fully accept their physical condition. This tendency is not confined to body dissatisfaction in isolation. Syahputra et al. (2025) found that body shaming experienced by students at the senior high school level was significantly associated with lower self-esteem, accounting for more than a quarter of the variance in students' self-worth, suggesting that negative appearance-related evaluations, whether self-directed or received from others, converge on the same underlying psychological vulnerability. Body image itself has been conceptualized in various ways. Thompson et al. (1999) describe it as a complex, multidimensional construct comprising affective, cognitive, behavioral, and perceptual components that must be understood in relation to the specific psychological process being examined rather than treated as a single global idea. Cash & Pruzinsky (2002) similarly frame body image as an individual's attitude toward the body, encompassing both positive and negative evaluations, while Izydorczyk (2022) extends this view by positioning body image as part of the bodily self-structure that predicts eating behavior amid ongoing social, cultural, and technological change.

Self-esteem, first conceptualized by Rosenberg (1965) as an individual's overall attitude toward the self, encompassing both self-acceptance and self-worth in either a positive or negative direction, has repeatedly been linked to body image in the literature. Branden (1994) frames self-esteem as confidence in one's ability to think and to cope with life's challenges together with the belief that one deserves happiness, whereas Tafarodi & Wiliam B. Swann (1995) later refined the construct into two dimensions, namely self-competence and self-liking. Building on this theoretical foundation, previous studies generally converge on the idea that self-esteem functions as a protective factor against negative body image, although the findings are not entirely uniform. Himawan (2023), for example, found a positive relationship between self-esteem and body image among adolescent girls ($r = 0.297 > r_{\text{table}} = 0.279$), whereas Maemunah (2020) reported no significant relationship between body-image satisfaction and self-esteem among female university students ($r_s = 0.223$). Malasari (2020) similarly found a significant positive relationship ($p = 0.000$), reinforcing the idea that a more positive body image corresponds with higher self-esteem. A comparable pattern was reported by Syahputra (2025) among adolescent girls at a vocational high school in Jakarta, where body image significantly and positively predicted self-confidence, explaining as much as 41% of its variance, indicating that how

adolescents perceive their bodies carries psychological consequences that extend well beyond body image itself. This inconsistency across studies, particularly between adolescent and young-adult samples, underscores the need for further investigation among the comparatively underexamined junior-high-school population.

Preliminary observation at SMP Al-Akhyar reinforced the relevance of this issue. Many female students appeared to lack confidence in their appearance, frequently covering their faces in photographs, applying blur effects, or adding stickers to conceal certain body parts, a pattern of behavior consistent with Grogan's (1999) description of negative body-image-related behavior. Some students admitted to feeling less attractive than their peers or social media figures and reported experiencing mockery from classmates. Combined with the inconsistent findings reported in earlier studies (Sari et al., 2022) these observations point to a genuine and pressing need for empirical research examining the relationship between self-esteem and body image specifically among early-adolescent girls, a group that is highly sensitive to physical and social change yet still underrepresented in the existing literature.

From a theoretical standpoint, self-esteem and body image are conceptually linked through the way adolescents evaluate themselves as a whole. Tatarodi & Swann (1995) distinguish between self-competence, an individual's confidence in her own abilities, and self-liking, the extent to which an individual regards herself as a person of worth; both dimensions plausibly shape how an adolescent interprets and reacts to her physical appearance. On the other side of the relationship, the affective, cognitive, behavioral, and perceptual dimensions of body image proposed by Thompson J et al. (1999) describe the emotional reactions, belief systems, avoidance behaviors, and size estimations through which appearance-related self-evaluation is expressed. Positioning self-esteem as a factor associated with body image, as illustrated in the conceptual framework underlying this study, therefore offers a coherent lens for understanding why adolescents who feel capable and worthy of acceptance tend to view their bodies more favorably than those who do not.

Taken together, while self-esteem is theoretically expected to protect adolescents from developing a negative body image, the empirical evidence reviewed above remains inconsistent, and the relationship between the two variables has rarely been examined among female junior high school students specifically, a population that is still relatively underresearched compared with older adolescents and young adults despite entering the earliest and arguably most sensitive stage of body-image formation. Building on this background and this research gap, the present study was designed to describe the pattern of self-esteem among female students at SMP Al-Akhyar, to describe their pattern of body image, and to examine the relationship between self-esteem and body image in this population. It is expected that the findings will contribute both theoretically, by enriching the literature on self-esteem and body image among early-adolescent girls, and practically, by providing schools, guidance and counseling teachers, and parents with an empirical basis for supporting healthy self-esteem and body image among female adolescents.

Method

This study employed a quantitative correlational design to examine the relationship between self-esteem (X) and body image (Y) among female students at SMP Al-Akhyar. A correlational design was selected because it allows the researcher to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between two variables without manipulating either of them (Sugiyono, 2013). Through this approach, the study sought to identify the extent to which students' self-esteem was associated with their body image.

Participants

The participants were the entire population of female students enrolled at SMP Al-Akhyar, Jakarta, in the 2025/2026 academic year, totaling 110 students spread across grades VII, VIII, and IX. These students were distributed across eight classes: VII A (13 students), VII B (15 students), VII C (10 students), VIII A (10 students), VIII B (16 students), VIII C (14 students), IX A (15 students), and IX B (17 students), for a total of 110 female students. Female students at this level fall within the early-adolescence category, generally aged between 12 and 16 years, a phase marked by rapid physical growth alongside increasingly prominent psychological and emotional development.

Sampling Procedures

The sample was obtained through total sampling (saturated sampling), a technique in which all members of the population are used as the sample (Sugiyono, 2013). This technique was considered appropriate because the population of 110 students was still small enough to be examined in its entirety, so that the resulting data would more fully reflect the actual condition of the population. Accordingly, all 110 female students who made up the population participated as respondents in this study.

Instrument

Data were collected using two Likert-scale questionnaires developed by the researcher: a self-esteem scale and a body image scale. Both scales used a four-point Likert format without a neutral midpoint (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree), so that respondents were required to select the response that most closely reflected their actual condition. Favorable items were scored 4 (Strongly Agree), 3 (Agree), 2 (Disagree), and 1 (Strongly Disagree), while unfavorable items were scored in reverse: 1 (Strongly Agree), 2 (Agree), 3 (Disagree), and 4 (Strongly Disagree). The two instruments are described separately below.

Self-Esteem Scale. The self-esteem scale was constructed based on Rosenberg's (1965) conception of self-esteem as a global self-evaluation of the self, and was operationalized through the two dimensions proposed by Tafari & Swann (1995), namely self-competence and self-liking. The self-competence dimension covers the indicators of confidence in one's ability to achieve personal goals (e.g., "I am confident that I can achieve the personal goals I have set") and the ability to control one's environment or situation, while the self-liking dimension covers the indicators of feeling worthy as a person and self-acceptance within one's social environment (e.g., "I believe that others can accept me as I am"). The scale consisted of 24 items (12 favorable and 12 unfavorable), evenly distributed across the two dimensions.

Body Image Scale. The body image scale was developed based on the four-dimensional model proposed by Thompson et al. (1999), comprising the affective, cognitive, behavioral, and perceptual dimensions of body image. The affective dimension covers negative emotional reactions toward one's appearance (e.g., "I feel annoyed when looking at my own body shape"); the cognitive dimension covers unrealistic beliefs or standards about the ideal body (e.g., "I believe the ideal body must be fair-skinned and thin"); the behavioral dimension covers avoidance of situations that trigger appearance-related evaluation (e.g., "I cover certain body parts when meeting friends"); and the perceptual dimension covers inaccurate estimation of one's own body size (e.g., "I perceive my body as far heavier than it actually is"). The scale initially consisted of 32 items (16 favorable and 16 unfavorable) evenly distributed across the four dimensions, using the same four-point response format described above.

Instrument validity was examined through a try-out involving 130 respondents, using item-total correlation analysis in IBM SPSS 25.0. An item was considered valid if its corrected item-total correlation exceeded the *r*-table value of 0.172. All 24 items of the self-esteem scale met this criterion and were retained, whereas two items on the body image scale (items 13 and 24) fell below the threshold and were excluded, leaving 30 valid items for the main data collection.

Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha yielded coefficients of .866 for the self-esteem scale and .863 for the body image scale, both exceeding the minimum threshold of .60 (Azizah & Chalimatusadiah, 2025), indicating that both instruments were reliable.

Procedures

Data were collected online over three days by distributing the two questionnaires through a Google Form to all 110 students who constituted the research sample. Before completing the questionnaires, each participant was presented with a brief explanation of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of the responses, and was asked to provide consent before proceeding to the items. The researcher directly coordinated with the students throughout the data collection process to ensure that all 110 students had the opportunity to complete the questionnaires.

On the first day, the researcher waited for the students who were present to complete the questionnaires directly in their respective classrooms. For students who were absent, the researcher asked a class representative to send the questionnaire link to them so that they could complete it at home. Students who experienced limited internet data availability were also permitted to complete the questionnaire at home when they had sufficient internet access. On the second day, the researcher returned to the school to follow up with students who had not yet completed the questionnaires. The researcher reviewed the response list, identified the students who had not submitted their responses, and asked them to complete the questionnaires. This follow-up process ensured that students who had been absent on the first day or had not completed the questionnaires for other reasons were still given an opportunity to participate.

On the third day, the researcher conducted a final check of the response list to ensure that no responses were missing. The researcher compared the list of students in the population with the submitted responses and followed up on any remaining incomplete responses. Through this three-day data collection and follow-up process, all 110 students completed and submitted the questionnaires, yielding a 100% response rate. Therefore, the full sample of 110 responses was used in the subsequent analysis.

Because both instruments were self-constructed, particular attention was paid to ensuring that the item wording was appropriate for early-adolescent respondents. Items were written in simple, everyday Indonesian language and were reviewed through expert judgement prior to the try-out, so that participants could respond according to their actual condition without ambiguity regarding the meaning of each statement

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed descriptively to obtain an overview of each variable, followed by two prerequisite tests: a normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov formula and a linearity test using analysis of variance (ANOVA). Data were considered normally distributed when the significance value exceeded 0.05, and the relationship between the two variables was considered linear when the deviation-from-linearity significance value exceeded 0.05. Hypothesis testing was then carried out using Pearson product-moment correlation analysis to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between self-esteem and body image, with the following statistical hypotheses: $H_a: \rho \neq 0$ (there is a relationship between self-esteem and body image) and $H_0: \rho = 0$ (there is no relationship between self-esteem and body image). All statistical procedures were performed using IBM SPSS 25.0

Results and Discussions

The study was conducted at SMP Al-Akhyar, Jakarta, a junior high school established in 1986 and accredited B under the Al-Akhyar Islamic Education Foundation. In the 2025/2026 academic year, the school enrolled 247 students across grades VII to IX, of whom 110 were female students, supported by 14 teaching and administrative staff. This study involved the entire population of these 110 female students, obtained through total sampling. Participants were spread across grades VII, VIII, and IX, corresponding to an early-adolescence age range of approximately 12 to 16 years, as presented previously in Table 1. All 110 questionnaires distributed through Google Form were completed and returned, so that the full population was represented in the subsequent statistical analysis.

Before examining the categorization of each variable, a descriptive analysis was conducted to provide a general overview of the self-esteem and body image data. The results are presented in Table 1

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Self-Esteem and Body Image

Statistic	Self-Esteem (X)	Body Image (Y)
N	110	110
Minimum	42	50
Maximum	96	95
Mean	71.30	62.85
Std. Deviation	8.303	7.784
Variance	68.946	60.584

Table 1 shows that self-esteem scores ranged from 42 to 96 with a mean of 71.30, while body image scores ranged from 50 to 95 with a mean of 62.85. These figures provide the descriptive basis for the categorization presented in the following section.

The self-esteem scale, consisting of 24 valid items with four response alternatives, produced a possible score range of 24 to 96. Scores were grouped into five categories using a class interval of 14, obtained by dividing the range between the highest and lowest possible scores by the number of categories. The categorization results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Self-Esteem Category Distribution

Category	Interval	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	84–96	12	10.9%
High	70–83	73	66.4%
Moderate	56–69	24	21.8%
Low	42–55	1	0.9%
Very Low	24–41	0	0%
Total		110	100%

Table 2 shows that of the 110 respondents, 12 students (10.9%) fell into the very high category, 73 students (66.4%) into the high category, 24 students (21.8%) into the moderate category, 1 student (0.9%) into the low category, and none fell into the very low category. Overall, self-esteem among female students at SMP Al-Akhyar was predominantly high, with 73 respondents (66.4%) in this category, indicating that most students in this sample generally held a positive overall evaluation of themselves.

The body image scale, consisting of 30 valid items, produced a possible score range of 30 to 120. Applying the same procedure, scores were grouped into five categories using a class interval of 18. The categorization results are presented in Table 3

Table 3. Body Image Category Distribution

Category	Interval	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	103–120	0	0%
High	85–102	1	0.9%
Moderate	67–84	34	30.9%
Low	49–66	75	68.2%
Very Low	30–48	0	0%
Total		110	100%

Table 3 shows that of the 110 respondents, none fell into the very high category, 1 student (0.9%) fell into the high category, 34 students (30.9%) fell into the moderate category, 75 students (68.2%) fell into the low category, and none fell into the very low category. Overall, body image among female students at SMP Al-Akhyar was predominantly low, with 75 respondents (68.2%) in this category. It is important to note that higher scores on this scale reflect a stronger tendency toward negative body image, so that a predominantly low score indicates that most students in this sample tended toward a relatively healthier body image rather than a negative one.

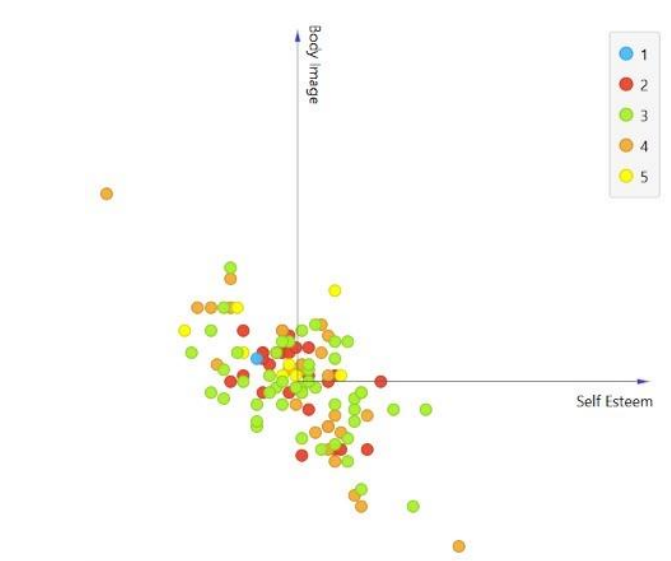


Figure 1. Distribution of Body Image and Self-Esteem Scores by Age Group

Figure 1 presents the scatter distribution of body image and self-esteem scores across five age groups of respondents, namely 12 years old (1), 13 years old (2), 14 years old (3), 15 years old (4), and 16 years old (5). Visually, all five age groups display a relatively similar distribution pattern; the data points from different age groups largely overlap one another, and no clearly separated clustering by age can be observed. Each age group also shows considerable internal variation in both body image and self-esteem scores, indicating that students of the same age do not necessarily share the same score pattern.

It is important to emphasize that this scatter plot is presented solely as a descriptive visualization of how respondents' scores are distributed and was not intended to test any effect of age. The present study was not designed to examine the influence of age on body image or self-esteem, nor to compare these variables across age groups; therefore, the pattern shown in Figure 1 should not be interpreted as evidence of an age-related effect or of differences between age groups. The interpretation offered here is strictly descriptive and is not to be extended into conclusions that were not tested in this study.

A normality test was conducted to determine whether the self-esteem and body image data were normally distributed, using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov formula in IBM SPSS 25. The results are presented in Table 4

Table 4. Results of the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Statistic	Self-Esteem (X)	Body Image (Y)
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	0.073	0.070
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.200	0.200

The Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value for self-esteem was 0.200 and for body image was 0.200, both exceeding the 0.05 threshold. It can therefore be concluded that the data for both variables were normally distributed, satisfying the normality assumption required for the subsequent correlation analysis.

A linearity test was conducted to determine whether self-esteem and body image had a linear relationship, a prerequisite for Pearson product-moment correlation analysis. The relationship was considered linear if the deviation-from-linearity significance value exceeded 0.05. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Linearity Test (ANOVA Table) for Body Image & Self-Esteem

Source	F	Sig.
Deviation from Linearity	0.907	0.610

The Deviation from Linearity significance value was 0.610, which is greater than 0.05. This result indicates that the relationship between self-esteem and body image is linear, so that Pearson product-moment correlation analysis could appropriately be applied to test the research hypothesis.

Hypothesis testing was carried out using Pearson product-moment correlation analysis to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between self-esteem and body image. This technique was chosen because both variables were measured on an interval scale and were normally distributed. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Result

Variables	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Self-Esteem – Body Image	-0.602	0.000	110

The Pearson correlation analysis yielded a coefficient of $r = -0.602$ with a significance value of $p = 0.000$. Because this significance value is smaller than the 0.05 significance level, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted, indicating a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and body image among the participants. The negative direction of this relationship means that the higher the students' self-esteem score, the lower their tendency toward negative body image, and conversely.

Based on the Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = -0.602$, the coefficient of determination ($KD = r^2 \times 100\%$) was calculated to be 36.24%. This figure indicates that self-esteem statistically accounts for 36.24% of the tendency toward negative body image among female students at SMP

Al-Akhyar, while the remaining 63.76% is attributable to other factors outside the scope of this study, such as social comparison, peer relationships, family environment, and exposure to social media.

The findings of this study show that self-esteem among female students at SMP Al-Akhyar was predominantly high, whereas body image was predominantly low, that is, most students tended toward a relatively healthier rather than negative body image. The Pearson correlation analysis further revealed a significant negative relationship between the two variables, a coefficient that falls within the strong category. Because higher scores on the body image scale reflect a stronger tendency toward negative body image, this negative correlation indicates that the higher a student's self-esteem, the lower her tendency toward negative body image, and conversely. This pattern suggests that self-esteem is meaningfully associated with how female adolescents perceive and evaluate their physical appearance, although body image is unlikely to be shaped by self-esteem alone; other factors beyond the scope of this study are also likely to contribute and warrant further investigation.

These results are consistent with Rosenberg's (1965) conception of self-esteem as an individual's overall attitude toward the self, encompassing both positive and negative self-evaluation. Students with high self-esteem tend to accept themselves, feel worthy, and hold confidence in their own capabilities, which in turn allows them to accept their physical condition more positively. Conversely, students with low self-esteem tend to feel less confident and to focus more heavily on their perceived shortcomings, including their physical appearance.

This pattern can also be considered in relation to the two dimensions of self-esteem proposed by Tafarodi & Swann (1995), namely self-competence and self-liking, and the four dimensions of body image proposed by Thompson J et al. (1999). Although this study did not statistically test each dimension separately, the content of the instrument items offers a useful qualitative lens for interpreting the overall pattern. On the self-competence dimension, items such as "I am confident that I can achieve the personal goals I have set" reflect students' belief in their own abilities, while on the self-liking dimension, items such as "I believe that others can accept me as I am" reflect students' sense of self-worth; students who responded favorably to items of this kind would be expected, by the logic of the instrument, to also report a more positive body image. On the body image scale, the affective dimension is represented by items such as "I feel annoyed when looking at my own body shape," the cognitive dimension by items such as "I believe the ideal body must be fair-skinned and thin," the behavioral dimension by items such as "I cover certain body parts when meeting friends," and the perceptual dimension by items such as "I perceive my body as far heavier than it actually is." Taken together, these item contents illustrate the general mechanism through which self-esteem and body image are expected to relate, rather than constituting separate, empirically tested findings for each dimension in this study.

The present findings extend a growing body of research linking self-esteem and body image among Indonesian adolescents, while also revealing some points of divergence. Consistent with the present study, Permatasari et al. (2025) found significant relationships between both self-esteem and fear of rejection ($p = 0.002$) and body image and fear of rejection ($p = 0.003$) among adolescent girls. These findings underscore that adolescents are particularly sensitive to social evaluation and peer acceptance, which may influence how they evaluate themselves and their physical appearance. Cahyati (2025) similarly reported a significant relationship between body image and self-esteem among adolescents ($p = 0.009$, $\alpha < 0.01$), reinforcing the idea that self-acceptance and positive self-evaluation are related to how adolescents perceive their physical condition. Putri & Lestari (2025) found that body image and self-esteem jointly predicted self-confidence among junior high school students ($F = 187.033$, $R = 0.932$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that both variables may contribute to adolescents' confidence in themselves. Indriasari et al. (2023) also reported a significant effect of body image on self-esteem ($p = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.180$) when examined from a gender perspective. Himawan (2023) likewise found a positive relationship between self-esteem and body image among adolescent girls ($r = 0.297 > r_{\text{table}} 0.279$), while Novarima & Munawaroh (2023) reported a significant positive relationship

between body image and self-esteem among Instagram users ($r_s = 0.245$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Salsabilla (2020) additionally found a significant relationship between self-esteem and self-confidence among adolescent girls ($p = 0.003$), further supporting the role of self-esteem in adolescents' confidence and acceptance of their physical condition. Taken together, these studies generally support the relevance of self-esteem and body image in adolescents' self-evaluation, although the strength and direction of the relationships may vary across populations and research contexts.

Nevertheless, several studies have produced inconsistent findings. Sari et al. (2022) found no significant relationship between body-image satisfaction and self-esteem among overweight adolescent girls ($p = 0.665$). Silmi (2021) also reported a non-significant negative relationship between body image and self-esteem among Instagram users ($r = -0.084$, $\alpha = 0.252$), while Maemunah (2020) similarly found no significant relationship between body-image satisfaction and self-esteem among female university students ($r_s = 0.223$). These discrepancies suggest that the relationship between self-esteem and body image may be shaped by differences in sample characteristics, such as age group, weight status, and social media use patterns. In some populations, self-esteem may also draw more heavily on other sources of self-worth, such as academic achievement, peer relationships, or emotional support, rather than physical appearance alone. The present study, which involved a younger early-adolescent population and used total sampling within a single school, adds evidence that the relationship between self-esteem and body image can already be observed at this earlier developmental stage.

Beyond the variables directly examined in this study, several factors may help explain the relationship between self-esteem and body image among adolescents. Garbett et al. (2023) found that Indonesian girls and young women experience considerable social pressure regarding appearance, particularly body weight and skin tone. Some adolescent girls reported feeling pressured to be thin and experiencing insecurity about their physical appearance, which in some cases was associated with avoidance of social situations. These findings illustrate how social and appearance-related pressures may shape adolescents' perceptions of their bodies. The role of the social environment is also relevant in relation to self-esteem. Syahputra et al. (2025) examined the role of self-esteem in narcissistic tendencies among Instagram-active students and highlighted the relevance of social media to adolescents' self-perception and social interactions. This suggests that adolescents' self-evaluations may be influenced by the social and digital environments in which they interact. In the context of body image, such influences may encourage social comparison and increase attention to prevailing appearance standards.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the relationship between self-esteem and body image may be influenced by factors beyond the two variables directly examined in this study, including self-acceptance, social comparison, peer environment, exposure to appearance-focused social media content, and evaluative feedback from others regarding physical appearance. Students with high self-esteem may be better able to accept both their strengths and limitations when facing appearance-related comparisons, which may reduce their tendency to develop a negative body image. However, these factors were not directly tested in the present study and should therefore be regarded as possible explanations rather than established findings. Future research that measures these factors directly is needed to determine their contribution to the relationship between self-esteem and body image among adolescents.

These findings carry direct implications for the field of guidance and counseling, particularly within personal-social services in schools. Guidance and counseling teachers hold an important role in helping students strengthen their self-esteem and build a positive body image through classical guidance, group counseling, individual counseling, information services, and content-mastery services. Through such services, students can be assisted in developing greater self-acceptance, self-confidence, and a more positive mindset toward themselves, thereby reducing the tendency toward negative body image among adolescents. This protective role of self-esteem is likely not limited to body image concerns alone. Syahputra et al. (2026) demonstrated that self-esteem was a significant negative predictor of self-harming behavior among junior high school

students, reinforcing the argument that strengthening students' self-worth through counseling services may serve as a broader safeguard for adolescent psychological well-being rather than a remedy for appearance-related distress alone. In this way, the present study contributes not only theoretical insight into the self-esteem-body image relationship among early-adolescent girls, an age group that remains comparatively underexamined in the existing literature, but also a practical basis for designing school-based interventions that support the psychological well-being of female students.

Limitations. This study is not without limitations. Data collection required follow-up over three days to ensure that all students in the population completed the online questionnaires, particularly students who were absent on the first day and those who had limited internet data. In addition, the study focused only on two variables, self-esteem and body image, so that other factors that may plausibly influence body image among adolescents, such as social comparison, family environment, or social media use, were not examined directly and remain a direction for future research. The correlational and cross-sectional design used in this study also means that no causal relationship between self-esteem and body image can be established, and the pattern observed here reflects a single point in time rather than how the relationship may develop over the course of adolescence. Furthermore, both variables were measured using self-report instruments, which may be subject to social desirability bias or limited self-awareness among early-adolescent respondents. Finally, because participants were recruited from a single school using total sampling, the findings should be generalized with caution and may not fully represent female junior high school students in other schools or regions. Future studies are encouraged to involve a broader and more diverse sample across multiple schools, to incorporate additional variables, and to apply longitudinal or experimental designs in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between self-esteem and body image.

Conclusions

This study found that self-esteem among female students at SMP Al-Akhyar was predominantly high, whereas their body image was predominantly low. A significant negative relationship was found between the two variables ($r = -0.602$; $p = 0.000$), indicating that the higher a student's self-esteem, the lower her tendency toward negative body image, and conversely. These findings indicate that how female students evaluate and value themselves plays an important role in shaping their perception of their physical condition and appearance.

These results underscore the relevance of guidance and counseling services in supporting adolescent psychological well-being. Guidance and counseling teachers are encouraged to strengthen students' self-esteem and to help them develop a healthier body image through classical guidance, group counseling, individual counseling, information services, and content-mastery services, so that students come to understand that self-worth is determined not only by physical appearance but also by ability, potential, and personal strengths.

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