

A Phenomenological Narrative of Body perception: A study of female students at Razi University of Kermanshah

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Article Info	Extended Abstract
Article type: Research Article Article history: Received: 07 November 2025 Received in revised form: 06 December 2025 Accepted: 08 December 2025 Published online: 15 June 2026 Keywords: <i>Attitude towards the body, phenomenology, social space, ideal body, girls at Razi University.</i>	Objective: In today's society, physical appearance has become increasingly important, and women and girls strive for an attractive look. Attitudes toward the body have changed compared to the past. Women no longer see the body as a natural entity but rather as a cultural and social product. In this context, the body has gained significant social importance as an aesthetic object, because it can be manipulated, like something painted or engraved. Even women of the same sex experience their bodies differently across various classes and races, living their personal and social lives in diverse ways. Nevertheless, their lives contain common elements and experiences, such as having a subordinate position relative to men, feeling excluded from the male-dominated world, fear of men's world, inability to express themselves freely, fear of harassment and violence, being subject to the male gaze, and similar experiences. Considering these issues, this study seeks to understand how women perceive their bodies and what factors or categories shape women's perception of the body based on their lived experiences. Therefore, this study was conducted with the aim of examining attitudes toward the body among female students at Razi University in Kermanshah using a phenomenological approach. Method: The present study is qualitative and phenomenological. When the goal of a qualitative study is to examine individuals' lived experiences regarding a phenomenon, the phenomenological method is used. This approach was chosen in the current study because the aim was to explore the lived experiences and gain a deep understanding of female students' attitudes toward their bodies. The qualitative analysis process in phenomenology was conducted using coding as follows: interviews were carried out with participants selected through purposive sampling. The recorded data from participants were repeatedly listened to, and their statements were transcribed word by word. To understand participants' feelings and experiences, the transcripts were read multiple times. After reviewing all participant descriptions, meaningful information and data related to the phenomenon were highlighted, important sentences were identified, and coding was performed. In this study, inclusion criteria required participants to be female students who were capable and willing to share their lived experiences regarding attitudes toward the body and who were willing to participate in in-depth interviews. Those unwilling



to cooperate or who withdrew from the interview were excluded. Sampling was purposive and theoretical, and interviews continued until theoretical saturation was reached to identify all dimensions of the phenomenon. Ultimately, 16 participants were included. Prior coordination was made with each participant, and 90-minute interviews were conducted. Participants were assured that their information would remain confidential. Demographic data such as age, education, and field of study were collected. Initial coding involved line-by-line reading of the interview transcripts, extracting key concepts and main statements, and forming initial categories and classes. Secondary coding involved organizing information, identifying subcategories, and forming final categories. For data analysis, recorded interviews were transcribed, followed by open coding to extract primary concepts. These concepts were then grouped into categories, which were ultimately interpreted and analyzed.

Findings: The findings indicate that attitudes toward the body are influenced by a combination of social, cultural, economic, and individual factors, each interacting to give specific meaning and importance to women's bodies and appearance. One of the categories identified in this study was social media, with participants describing diverse experiences of interacting with these platforms and their influence on attitudes toward their bodies. Another category was social pressure, which participants experienced and reported as affecting their clothing choices and appearance. These experiences show that individuals face social pressures differently, and these pressures influence their body-related attitudes and behaviors. Some participants emphasized that the need to align with societal expectations changed their behaviors and attitudes, while others were less affected. Another identified category was the ideal body image, which participants experienced and described from different perspectives. Some associated the ideal body with physical health. These findings indicate that the perception of the ideal body is multidimensional and personal; each participant considers different aspects depending on her lived experiences and personal attitudes, including physical and mental health, exercise, nutrition, makeup, skincare, and appearance traits such as hair color and skin condition. Economic factors were another category influencing body attitudes and the importance given to appearance. Participants reported that financial limitations prevent them from achieving their desired ideals, with some of these ideals being purely conceptual. These findings show that while girls have body ideals, family financial constraints and lack of independent income limit their ability to care for their bodies as they wish. The university environment and dormitory life were also identified as categories closely linked to family traditions and values, which can gradually affect girls' attitudes and clothing choices. Opposite-sex attitudes and social acceptance were additional categories impacting girls' views of their bodies. Subcategories included the attractiveness of women wearing makeup to men, men's opinions on women's



clothing and appearance, influence from the opposite sex, and increased chances of marriage. Finally, attitudes toward cosmetic surgery and clothing included both positive and negative perspectives. Positive views encompassed undergoing surgery to correct physical problems, enhance self-confidence, and address individual imperfections.

Conclusion: Overall, the lived experiences of the participants indicate that attitudes toward the body result from a complex interaction between individual self-awareness, society, culture, media, and economic resources. These attitudes are constantly evolving and adapting to different social and cultural environments. Therefore, examining body attitudes—especially among the younger generation—requires a multidimensional perspective and a deep understanding of individuals' lived experiences. Any policy-making, education, or intervention in this area must be grounded in an awareness of the relevant social, cultural, and economic realities.

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