Effects of Pupils' Perceptions towards School Uniform on Learners' Self-Esteem

Sempele N.L. Catherine[1*], Violet K. Mugalavai[2]

[1,2]Department of Family and Sciences Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya.

*Corresponding author: Sempele N.L. Catherine (Email: sempnaire@yahoo.com)

ABSTRACT

Clothing which includes school uniform is likely to influence one's body image perceptions. This study looked at the effects of pupils' perceptions towards school uniform on learners' self-esteem. The objective of the study was to investigate pupils' perceptions towards school uniform and the effect this has on learners' self-esteem. The hypothesis there is no significant relationship between school uniform and learners' self-esteem as perceived by pupils guided this study. Purposive and stratified sampling techniques were used to identify and select pupils from classes 5, 6, 7 and 8 to participate in the study. These are pupils aged between 10 and 16 years old in their adolescence stage of growth and development thus in the process of establishing their personality. The researchers used questionnaires and focus group discussions to collect the information required. The sample comprised of 248 pupils attending public primary schools in Marigat Division of Baringo County in Kenya. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data and the relationship and difference between variables was established using the Chi-square, correlation and the Anova analysis. The study established that based on perceptions towards school uniform, pupils significantly related school uniform to learners' self-esteem although there was no significant difference in perception by gender.

Keywords: School uniform, Self-esteem.

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumption informed by the ideology of consumerism has created a world rife with structural violence. Due to no fault of their own, Northern consumers' purchases harm others, other species and the environment. They even harm themselves because consumerism leads to a life of oppression within a society shaped by market values (e.g., competition, scarcity, wealth accumulation, self-interest and efficiency). The resultant consumer culture reinforces individualism. It values money and materialism over relationships. It keeps people stressed, angry and living in fear, which they assuage with more spending (McGregor, 2007, 2010). In his book about the perils of over consumption, Durning (1992) advocated for a culture of permanence instead of a culture of consumption, arguing that consumerism does not promote human happiness; hence, it cannot promote peace. Nearly a decade later, the United Nations (1998a) introduced a new concept called a culture of peace. It then proclaimed 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace (United Nations, 1998c), followed with the proclamation of a Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010) (United Nations, 1998b).

Clothing awareness is believed to begin in early childhood continuing throughout growth (Kaiser, 1997). Children's participation and concentration in school depends on their physical appearance and general presentation. Physical attractiveness greatly influences one's body image perceptions, which determines the development of their self-esteem (Kaiser, 1997; Lennon, 1990). According to Kaiser (1997), self-esteem entails individuals' feelings and attitudes towards themselves. These are more pronounced among the adolescents, a stage when children are trying to establish their personality. The stage is characterized by self-definition, selection, development of popularity and self-confidence (Kaiser, 1997). Recognition of self-concept is more abstract with a lot of peer involvement and the need for conformity (Maiyo, 2004).

Clothing is an important aspect in determining how high or low people perceive an individual. When children are well groomed, their concentration and participation in general societal activities are likely to be higher than when poorly presented (Shook, 1996; Thomas, 2004; Viadero, 2005). Studies have shown clothing as significant in the role of increasing pre-adolescent's self-worth (Maiyo, 2004). It is therefore important that pupils are dressed decently and in clothing they appreciate. School uniform forms part of such clothing. Pupils in neat and attractive school uniform feel confident and are at ease indulging in normal school routine (Thomas, 2004). On the other hand, pupils in school uniform they don't appreciate will not feel comfortable taking part in such school routine. Furthermore, they tend to have a low perception toward themselves (Viadero, 2005; Wolfe, 2009). Kaiser recommends that since self-esteem is an important component of self-worth more research should be carried out on it. In view of this, the researchers sought to investigate the effects of pupils' perceptions towards school uniform on learners' self-esteem. The objective of the study was to investigate pupils' perceptions towards school uniform and the effect this has on learners' self-esteem.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive research design was used to investigate the effects of pupils' perceptions towards school uniform on learners' self-esteem. This was a case of public primary schools in Marigat Division of Marigat District in Baringo County, Kenya. The rationale for selecting this area for study was based on the fact that Marigat division is an area prone to a number of calamities. Residents are forced to live in real hardship given that they cannot engage in high-scale farming due to the harsh climatic conditions and cattle rustling that disrupt peaceful settlements. Baringo County contributes about 1.32% to the national poverty level (Baringo District Development Plan, 2008). By the year 2000 about 62% of the population were reported to be food poor with the most poor encompassing the pastoralists, small-scale farmers, female-headed households and children who include HIV and AIDS orphans.   These factors in one way or the other influence the provision of basic needs by parents to their family members. School uniform is an important aspect of clothing given that it is worn at least five (71%) out of seven days of the week. This percentage may even be higher if school uniform happens to be one of the most important components of clothing a child possesses. The researchers chose this area for study because despite all these challenges that parents face in the process of providing their families needs, pupils' self-worth and body image remain salient since they are likely to influence the development of their self-esteem which may in turn influence their general performance in school.

The study obtained data from pupils in classes 5, 6, 7 and 8 attending public primary schools in the division. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), purposive sampling technique allows the researcher to use cases that have the required information or possess the required characteristics for the study. Pupils in these classes are in their adolescence stage of growth and development which formed the basis for this study. This is the stage when children develop their personality which influences their self-esteem. The sampling frame consisted of 2,479 pupils of which 1,273 (51%) were boys and 1,206 (49%) were girls. Hence, stratified random sampling technique was used to categorize the pupils by gender. This technique was deemed favorable because it ensured that the correct ratio of both boys and girls was represented in the study sample. Proportionate samples enable researchers to get accurate data for analysis (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The simple random sampling technique was then used to select 126 boys and 122 girls. These number of pupil respondents was proportionate to their total numbers within the strata.

The researchers also sought deeper insight on the effect of perceptions towards school uniform on learners' self-esteem from two focus group discussions that involved eleven pupils each. A focus group discussion guide was designed for the pupil respondents. The researchers identified pupils from two of the schools as participants in the focus group discussions. This was based on the fact that these two schools had the highest pupils' enrolment rates compared to the other four schools used in the study. The researchers then stratified these pupils into two groups by gender (605 boys and 553 girls). This ensured that both boys and girls were proportionately represented in the focus group discussion sample (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). Out of the strata identified, 11 pupils were then randomly selected as participants in the focus group discussions from each of the two schools selected. According to Catherine (2002), odd numbers work better than even numbers in any focus group discussion as this makes it harder for the pupils to pair up in breakaway conversations.

Questionnaires that were administered by the specific class teachers were also used to collect data from the respondents. They had both open and closed ended questions to allow for in-depth collection of information based on the objectives of the study. The open ended questions required the respondents to provide information pertaining to their demography while the closed ended questions based on a 5 point Likert scale required them to circle either strongly agree (SA = 5), agree (A = 4), remain neutral (N = 3), disagree (DA = 2) or strongly disagree (SD = 1) with the attributes stipulated. The questionnaire had three sections: - A, B, and C. In part A, pupils filled in their general bio data relevant for the study. Part B required them to rate given statements regarding their perceptions towards school uniform against a 5 point continuum. Part C required them to rate their views regarding ten attributes on self-esteem against a 5 point Likert Scale of SD, D, N, A, and SA.

The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale was adopted and used to develop the 5 point Likert scale used in the current study because it has shown high reliability with test-retest correlations typically in the range of 0.82 to 0.88 (Rodriguez, 2005). The reliability of the questionnaires was checked by computing the Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient. The coefficient of the sub scales developed on the attributes related to school uniform and self-esteem were adequate (α = 0.825 and α = 0.731 respectively.

Qualitative data obtained from the open ended questions was categorized into themes while quantitative data was assigned numerical values for analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences was then used to analyze the quantitative data. The attitude scale responses were scored as 1=SD, 2=D, 3=N, 4=A and 5=SA. A mean of 3 and above would thus denote a positive attitude towards the attributes stipulated whereas a mean of below 3 would denote a negative attitude. Frequency and percentage tables were generated for ease in comprehension and interpretation. The Chi-square analysis was carried out to test for the relationship between perceptions towards school uniform and learners' self-esteem. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), the Chi-square test is not a strong technique for establishing the relationship between variables. Based on this view, the researchers used the correlation test to analyze the degree and magnitude of the relationships between important variables and attributes of the study. The t-test

analysis was then used to establish whether gender had any influence on pupils' perceptions towards school uniform and its effect on learners' self-esteem. This is a test used to establish whether there is a significant difference between 2 means derived from 2 samples at a specified probability level (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The one way Anova test was then used to establish whether pupils' level of study had any influence on their perceptions towards school uniform and the effect it has on learners' self-esteem. This is a test used to compare groups on only 1 variable but at different levels (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
3.1. Perceptions towards Attributes Related to School Uniform
This sub-section had ten attributes related school uniform. The findings are presented in Figure 1. Most of the pupil respondents (over 50%) strongly agreed with nine of the attributes tested except the attribute 'creates uniformity among learners' that was true to 47% of the respondents. Only less than 13% of the respondents strongly disagreed with these 10 attributes on school uniform. This could be attributed to the fact that pupils felt they did not have adequate pairs of school uniform or their parents did not have the economic capability to provide their school uniform. The attribute 'enables me get assistance easily in case of need' was true to 92% pupils while 'pupils views should be considered when making decisions on school uniform' was true to 81% pupils.

Some of the pupils had these to say: -

'I only wish I had another pair of school uniform so that I could wear one to school and the other one to church'.

'I wish I had been asked to suggest the colour and design of my school uniform. It would have been the best I promise you'.
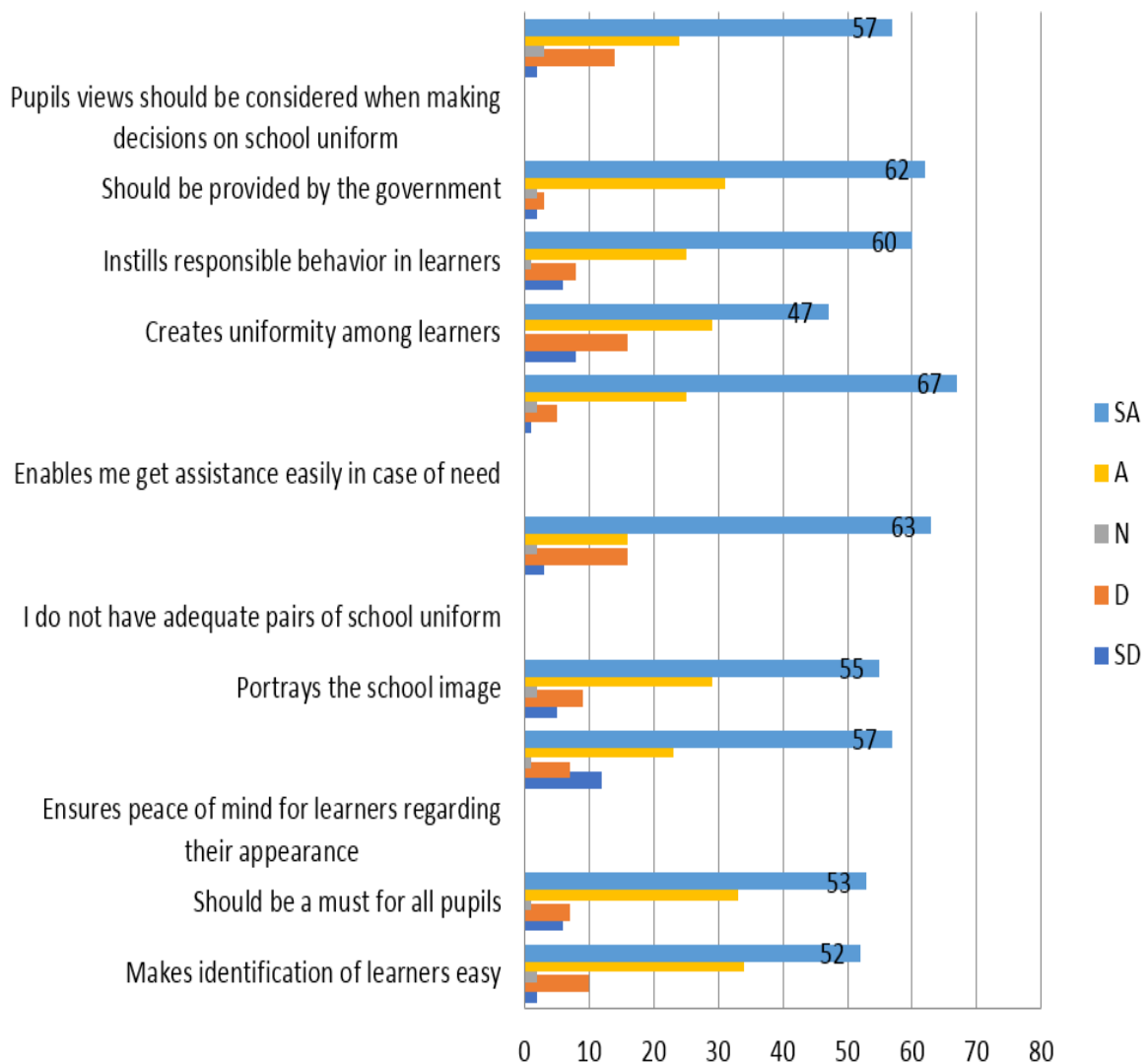

Figure 1. Distribution of pupils' responses towards attributes related to school uniform.

Further analysis on pupils' views towards school uniform based on gender revealed that the attributes 'enables me to

get assistance easily in case of need' and 'should be provided by the government' were true to 92% of both male and female pupils as presented in Table 1.

Based on class distribution, majority of class 5 (77%), class 6 (71%), class 7 (66%) and class 8 (76%) pupils agreed with all 10 attributes as indicated in Table 2. Most of the pupils from the four classes agreed with the 10 attributes related to school uniform with variations only on the degree of their agreement. On average, the frequency ratings for these ten attributes was 3.33.

Perceptions towards self-esteem attributes

It is a fact that clothing which includes school uniform may function to strengthen weak body image perceptions (Kaiser, 1997). In this view, the present study attempted to establish pupils' perceptions towards attributes on self-esteem. Ten attributes on self-esteem were formulated. The 5 point Likert scale used required the respondents to rate the attributes as per their feelings. The attributes were rated and the findings are shown in Figure 2.

The attribute 'I feel smart' was agreeable to an overwhelming 95% of the pupil respondents. School uniform 'makes me feel confident' and 'gives me a sense of belonging' 'were true attributes to 92% and 91% respondents respectively. Only about 20% of the respondents disagreed with 9 out of the 10 attributes apart from the attribute 'gives me a sense of pride' that was not true to 36% of the pupils. A majority of the pupils agreed with all the attributes stated. However, some attributes were more agreeable than others.

Table 1. Pupils' perceptions towards attributes related to school uniform by gender.

	Males (n = 128)		Females (n = 100)	
	NS	S	NS	S
Makes identification of learners easy	15	85	12	88
Should be a must for all pupils	13	87	15	85
Ensures peace of mind for learners regarding their appearance	19	81	23	77
Portrays the school image	13	87	18	82
I do not have adequate pairs of school uniform	18	82	26	74
Enables me get assistance easily in case of need	08	92	08	92
Creates uniformity among learners	19	81	30	70
Instills responsible behavior in learners	16	84	14	86
Should be provided by the government	07	92	05	95
Pupils views should be considered when making decisions on school uniform	19	81	19	81

n = 228

NS= Not satisfactory and S= satisfactory.

Table 2. Pupils' perceptions towards attributes related to school uniform by class.

Attributes related to school uniform	(%) Distribution of respondents							
	Five (n = 51)		Six (n = 65)		Seven (n = 58)		Eight (n= 54)	
	NT	T	NT	T	NT	T	NT	T
Makes identification of learners easy	10	90	14	86	17	83	13	87
Should be a must for all pupils	12	88	15	85	19	81	09	91
Ensures peace of mind for learners regarding their appearance	23	77	14	86	22	78	24	76
Portrays the school image	14	86	20	80	13	87	13	87
I do not have adequate pairs of school uniform	21	79	21	79	18	82	24	76
Enables me get assistance easily in case of need	04	96	08	92	17	83	04	96
Creates uniformity among learners	20	80	29	71	34	66	09	91
Instills responsible behavior in learners	12	88	18	82	15	85	15	85
Should be provided by the government	08	92	09	91	02	98	07	93
Pupils views should be considered when making decisions on school uniform	06	94	26	74	29	71	11	89

n = 228
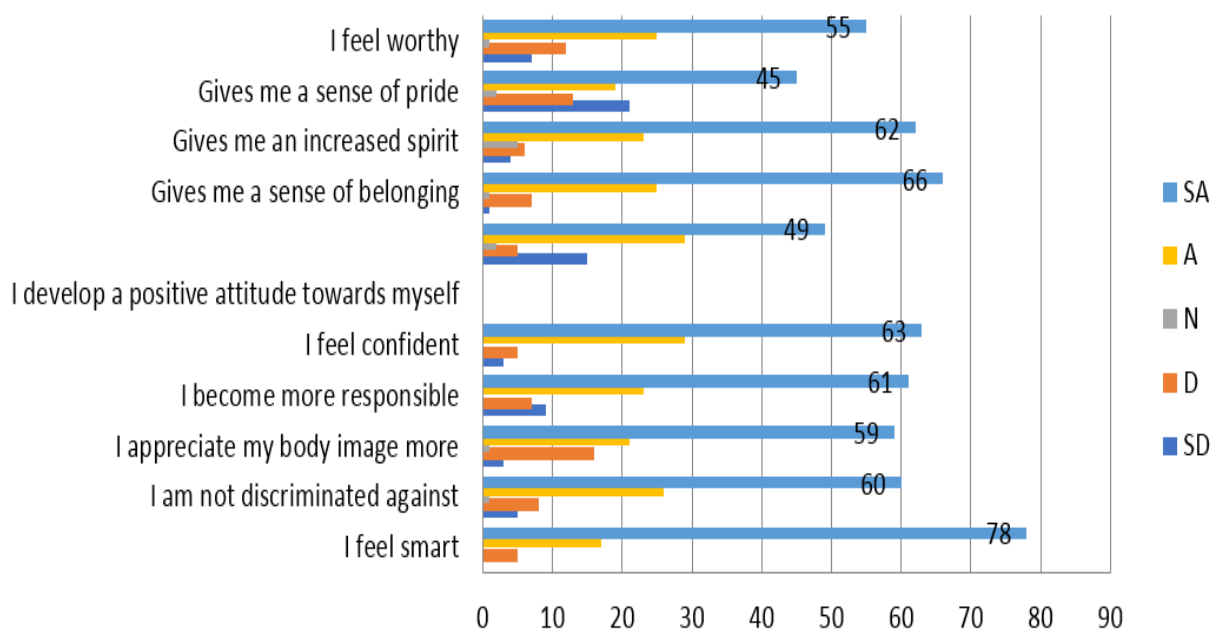NT = Not true and T = True

Figure 2. Distribution of pupils' responses towards self-esteem attributes.

In this study, all the 10 attributes on self-esteem were approved by at least 60% of both male and female pupils. Clothing including school uniform has been reported to increase adolescents' self-worth apart from influencing the wearer's feelings of self-respect, self-acceptance and self-esteem (Shook, 1996; Thomas, 2004; Viadero, 2005). The attribute 'I feel worthy' was most popular to both male (86%) and female (90%) respondents with the attribute 'I feel confident' being the least popular to 38% male and 40% female respondents. Boys (70%) tend to rely on school uniform to look smart to a greater extent than girls (62%). Table 3 has these details. However, all 10 attributes were popular although some were more popular than others to these pupil respondents. On average, the frequency ratings for these 10 attributes was 3.33. One of the female pupil's comments confirms this. She said:-
'I like my school uniform very much. In fact, I also wear it to church and when going on a journey. It makes me look very smart. My friends like it too'.

Table 3. Pupils' perceptions towards attributes on self-esteem by gender.

(%) Distribution of respondents

Attributes on self-esteem

	Males (n = 128)		Females (n = 100)	
	D	A	D	A
I feel smart	30	70	38	62
I am not discriminated against	15	85	15	85
I appreciate my body image	14	86	17	83
I become more responsible	15	85	17	83
I feel confident	38	62	40	60
I develop a positive attitude towards myself	22	78	29	71
Give me a sense of belonging	23	77	13	87
Gives me an increased spirit	28	72	32	68
Gives me a sense of pride	21	79	20	80
I feel worthy	14	86	10	90

n = 228
D = Disagree and A = Agree

Generally, the analysis on pupils' perceptions towards attributes on self-esteem by class revealed that over 60% of the pupils from all the four classes consented to most of the attributes. Only 1 attribute 'gives me a sense of pride' was approved by 55% of class 7 respondents as shown in Table 4. The attribute 'I feel smart', was overwhelmingly approved by 100% of the pupils in class 7 and 8. This may be attributed to the fact that boys and girls in class 7 and 8 who are aged between 12 and 16 years are more mature thus maybe more sure about their feelings towards the self.

Table 4. Pupils' perceptions towards attributes on self-esteem by class.

Attributes on self-esteem	(%) Distribution of respondents							
	Class 5 (n = 51)		Class 6 (n = 65)		Class 7 (n = 58)		Class 8 (n = 54)	
	D	A	D	A	D	A	D	A
I feel smart	22	78	03	97	00	100	00	100
I am not discriminated against	18	82	11	89	07	93	22	78
I appreciate my body image	29	71	12	88	21	79	18	82
I become more responsible	10	90	20	80	22	78	11	89
I feel confident	10	90	06	94	14	86	03	97
I develop a positive attitude towards myself	27	73	18	82	27	73	17	83
Give me a sense of belonging	06	94	12	88	09	91	09	91
Gives me an increased spirit	12	88	03	97	38	62	07	93
Gives me a sense of pride	33	67	28	72	45	55	39	61
I feel worthy	22	78	05	95	38	62	17	83

n = 228
D = Disagree; A = Agree

The Chi-square analysis was used to determine the existence of any relationship between pupils' perceptions towards the attributes related to school uniform and learners' self-esteem. The average frequency for the ten attributes related to school uniform was calculated as 3.33 and renamed school uniform while the average frequency for the ten attributes on self-esteem (3.33) was also computed and renamed self-esteem. The Chi-square test was then run to establish the relationship between school uniform and self-esteem. This answered the question; to what extent do pupils' self-perceptions towards school uniform affect their self-esteem? Both the Chi-square ($\chi 2$ = 10.28, df 1, p = 0.001) and correlation (r = 0.213) results from the pupils responses revealed a significant relationship between the effects of pupils' perceptions towards school uniform on learners' self-esteem at p < 0.01. These findings answered the

19

hypotheses that sought to find out whether there was a significant relationship between the effects of pupils' perceptions towards school uniform and learners' self-esteem. These findings agree with findings by Jonkey (2004) and Thomas (2004) which also showed that school uniform had a significant effect on learners' self-esteem. Based on pupils' perceptions, these findings implied that school uniform does influence learners' self-esteem. The kinds of school uniform pupils wear influences how good or bad they feel about themselves. The null hypothesis on the relationship between school uniform and learners' self-esteem as perceived by the pupils was rejected at the alpha level 0.01. Further, the correlation analysis was also carried out to establish the degree and magnitude of relationship between specific attributes of the study as shown in Table 5. The results revealed that pupils' perceptions towards effects of school uniform on learners' self-esteem negatively correlated with pupils age ($r = -0.149$) at $p < 0.05$, that is, pupils perceptions on the influence of school uniform on learners' self-esteem decreased with advancement in age. This may indicate that older pupils rely less on school uniform for the development of their self-esteem may be because they had matured with age. Pupils agreed that school uniform was salient for primary school pupils; they significantly related their perceptions towards school uniform with the attributes 'should be a must for all pupils' ($r = 0.650$), 'government should provide school uniform' ($r = 0.677$) and 'pupils views should be considered when making decisions regarding school uniform' ($r = 0.379$) all at $p < 0.05$. This indicated that pupils agreed that school uniform should be a must for all primary school-going pupils and those pupils' views should be sought when making decisions regarding school uniform. Furthermore, they strongly felt that the problems related to pupils having inadequate pairs of school uniform could be solved if the government provided them.

Table 5. The correlation analysis on the major study variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Gender	-							
Age	-.154*							
Class	-.012	.570**						
Pupils' view on school uniform	-.017	-.124	.055					
Pupils' view on self-esteem	.003	-.149*	.035	.213**				
Should be a must for all pupils	-.001	-058	.014	.650**	.148*			
Pupils have inadequate pairs	-.130*	.002	-.052	-.162*	.067	.033		
Government should provide	.023	-.075	.053	.677**	-.114	-.015	.084	
Seek pupils' views on school uniform	.019	-.098	.056	.379**	.204**	.132*	-.052	.028

Note: * $P < 0.05$
** $P < 0.01$

The independent t-test analysis was carried out to determine the difference in pupils' perceptions towards the effects of school uniform on learners' self-esteem by gender. The mean scores obtained were based on the Likert scale with a range of 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree and 1 = strongly disagree. The results indicated no significant difference in perceptions by gender for the pupil respondents. That is, the mean score for the female pupils' perceptions towards effects of school uniform on learners' self-esteem was 3.34 (SD = 0.49) compared to 3.33 (SD = 0.54) for the male pupils, a difference that was not significant ($t = -0.043$, $p = 0.966$).

A comparison of means was also done for attributes on self-esteem with the pupils' level of study as presented in Table 6. The class in which pupils were placed seemed to influence their views on the effects of perception towards school uniform on learners' self-esteem. There was a significant difference between pupils perceptions towards school uniform and learners' self-esteem ($F = 4.368$, $p = 0.005$) by class at $p < 0.01$.

Table 6. Anova for effects of perceptions towards school uniform on self-esteem by class.

Dependent Variable	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F - value	Sig.
Self-esteem						
	Between groups	3.337	3	1.112	4.368	0.005**
	Within groups	57.049	224	0.255		
	Total	60.387	227			

Note: ** P < 0.01.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that pupils in this study considered school uniform salient for primary school-going pupils. Furthermore, they significantly related their perceptions towards school uniform to learners' self-esteem.

However, it is the recommendation of the researchers that a rigorous behavioral observation of pupils in school uniform in a similar study be done to establish deeper insight on their feelings and behaviour when in school uniform as a basis of informing decisions regarding school uniform for primary school pupils. Moreover, school uniform should be made mandatory for primary school children.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

REFERENCES

Baringo District Development Plan. (2008). Effective management for sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction.

Catherine, D. (2002). *Practical research methods*. United Kingdom: User Friendly Guide to Mastering Research Techniques and Projects.

Jonkey, K. C. (2004). The relationship between school uniforms and a reduction in student behavioral problems. Dissertation Abstract International, (UMI No. 1419308).

Kaiser, S. B. (1997). *The social psychology of clothing: Symbolic appearance in context* (2nd ed.). New York: Fairchild.

Lennon, S. J. (1990). Effects of clothing attractiveness on perceptions. *Home Economics Research Journal, 18*(4), 303-310.Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1077727x9001800403.

Maiyo, C. R. (2004). *The role of clothing in developing self-worth among Pre-adolescents': A case of primary schools in Kasarani Division, Nairobi, Kenya.* Unpublished Thesis Kenyatta University.

Mugenda, O., & Mugenda, G. (2003). *Research methods*. Nairobi, Kenya: African Centre for Technology Studies.

Rodriguez, J. (2005). *Effects of school uniform on self-esteem' M. Arts.* Thesis Rowan University.

Shook, E. C. (1996). *Perceived clothing deprivation and its relationship to self-Esteem and social participation of young adolescents.* Dissertation Abstracts International.

Thomas, E. (2004). *Healthy Future: Barrier to primary school completion for Kenyan girls*. Washington, DC: John Hopkins University.

Viadero, D. (2005). Effects of student uniforms. Retrieved from: http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/01/12/18uniform.h24.html.

Wolfe, M. G. (2009). *Fashion* (7th ed.). USA: The Goodheart-Willcox Co. Inc.