

Kasım Tathlıoğlu 

PhD (Psychology), Associate Professor,

Bingöl University,

Bingöl, Turkey

kasimtatlilioglu@gmail.com

SELF-PERCEPTION IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

Annotation. *In this study is examined what self-perception is, how it is formed, what factors affect it and its importance in our lives according to humanistic theory. Self-perception refers to an individual's awareness and evaluation of their own characteristics, abilities, and behaviors. This concept plays a crucial role in shaping one's self-esteem, confidence, and interactions with the external world. Understanding self-perception and the factors that influence it is essential for comprehending human psychology and behavior. Self-perception is a dynamic and multifaceted construct influenced by social, cultural, and psychological factors. Self-esteem is a fundamental concept in humanistic psychology, and Carl Rogers, one of the leading figures in this field, emphasized its significance in personal development. Humanistic psychology gives a detailed explanation of self-concept. It refers to the perception one holds about oneself.*

Key words: Carl Rogers, A. Maslow, Humanistic psychology, self perception.

Research Type: Review.

Анотація. У цьому дослідженні розглядається, що таке самосприйняття, як воно формується, які фактори на нього впливають та яке його значення в нашому житті згідно з гуманістичною теорією. Самосприйняття стосується усвідомлення та оцінки людиною власних характеристик, здібностей та поведінки. Це поняття відіграє вирішальну роль у формуванні самооцінки, впевненості та взаємодії людини із зовнішнім світом. Розуміння

самосприйняття та факторів, що на нього впливають, є важливим для розуміння людської психології та поведінки. Самосприйняття – це динамічний та багатогранний конструкт, на який впливають соціальні, культурні та психологічні фактори. Самооцінка є фундаментальним поняттям у гуманістичній психології, і Карл Роджерс, одна з провідних постатей у цій галузі, наголошував на її значенні в особистісному розвитку. Гуманістична психологія дає детальне пояснення самосприйняття. Воно стосується сприйняття людини про себе.

Ключові слова: Карл Роджерс, А. Маслоу, гуманістична психологія, самосприйняття.

Тип дослідження: огляд.

Introduction. Self-perception is an individual's beliefs and evaluations regarding his/her identity, abilities, values, and social environment (Rosenberg, 1979) [16]. This concept is seen as an element that directly affects the individual's self-esteem, motivation and psychological well-being. According to Rogers, self-esteem is closely related to self-concept, which consists of an individual's perceptions and beliefs about themselves (Rogers, 1951) [12]. C. Rogers and A. Maslow introduced humanistic psychology in response to what they viewed as the overly pessimistic view of psychoanalysis (Schacter, Gilbert & Wegner, 2011) [17]. Humanistic psychology by the process of realizing and expressing one's own capabilities and creativity. Humanistic thinkers argued that there is a biological core or essence in human nature that precedes existence. Humanistic theorists believed that human nature is inherently good. But this was not an abstract metaphysical concept, but rather a characteristic grounded on our very biological being. Thus, they spoke of «growth» and «self-actualization», hoping that their studies would help bring out the best in us (Clay, 2002) [4].

The aim of the article is to reveal self-perception in context of humanistic psychology.

Research Results. Theoretical Background.

Self-perception theory, introduced by Bem (1972), suggests that people develop their self-concept by observing their own behavior and drawing conclusions about their attitudes and beliefs. This perspective contrasts with traditional cognitive theories, which assume that attitudes shape behavior. Instead, Bem's theory proposes that behavior can inform attitudes, particularly in situations where internal cues are weak or ambiguous (Bem, 1972) [3]. Another influential perspective is social comparison theory, proposed by Festinger (1954), which argues that individuals determine their own social and personal worth based on how they compare to others. This comparison process can significantly impact self-perception, leading to either positive self-evaluation or feelings of inadequacy (Festinger, 1954) [8].

What is self-perception?

Self-perception is the conclusions that people create about their attitudes and feelings based on their behaviors. Self-Perception is the view we have of ourselves, our characteristics, and the judgments we make about the characteristics we possess (<https://study.com/academy/lesson/self-perception>) [20]. In other words, self-perception is the result of people's attitudes and endurance towards infinity. According to Rogers, self-concept or self-perception is a general perception that results from the interaction of all thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and evaluations about ourselves. According to humanistic theory, self-perception is the sum of the beliefs, thoughts, and feelings an individual has about themselves and develops over a lifelong process. A healthy self-perception is characterized by an individual accepting themselves, recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, and setting realistic goals for themselves. A positive self-perception increases an individual's self-confidence, helps them cope with stress, and enables them to establish healthier relationships. A negative self-perception can lead to low self-confidence, anxiety, depression, and social isolation (<https://en.wikipedia.org>) [21].

The importance of self-perception. Self-perception plays an important role in every aspect of daily life. Everything from our relationships to our work life, from

our decisions to our behaviors are affected by our self-perception. A healthy self-perception helps us live a happier, more successful and more fulfilling life, while a negative self-perception can lead to a variety of problems. In relationships, a healthy self-perception allows us to establish healthier and more balanced relationships. Individuals who love and accept themselves are more open, honest and empathetic towards others. Individuals who are confident in themselves are more independent and free in their relationships. In business life, a healthy self-perception allows us to be more successful and motivated. Individuals who believe in their abilities and are confident in themselves set bigger goals and work harder to achieve them. Their success increases their self-confidence and positively affects their self-perception. In our decisions and behaviors, our sense of self determines what choices we make and how we act. Individuals who value themselves avoid behaviors that will harm themselves and make healthy choices. Individuals who believe in their potential are not afraid to try new things and take risks.

Carl Rogers and Self-Perception. Carl Rogers, a humanist psychologist, viewed self-perception as a fundamental part of the self-concept, which consists of how individuals see themselves and how they believe they are perceived by others. According to Rogers, self-perception is shaped by experiences, relationships, and social interactions. According to Rogers, self-concept or self-perception is a general perception that results from the interaction of all thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and evaluations about ourselves.

Key Aspects of Self-Perception in Rogers' Theory

1. Self-Concept. The organized and consistent set of beliefs and perceptions about oneself, including one's traits, abilities, and values.

2. Real Self vs. Ideal Self. Rogers distinguished between:

- **The real self.** Who a person truly is, based on actual experiences.
- **The ideal self.** Who a person aspires to be, influenced by societal expectations and personal aspirations.

- Psychological distress arises when there is a large gap (incongruence) between the real self and the ideal self.

3. Unconditional Positive Regard – Rogers believed that when individuals receive unconditional acceptance and support (especially in childhood), they develop a positive self-perception. On the other hand, conditional regard (love and approval based on meeting certain expectations) can lead to negative self-perception and incongruence.

4. Congruence. A healthy self-perception occurs when a person's self-concept aligns with their actual experiences. High congruence leads to psychological well-being, while incongruence can result in anxiety and low self-esteem.

5. The Fully Functioning Person. Rogers described the ideal state of self-perception as someone who: «Accepts themselves fully», «Is open to experience», «Lives authentically», «Engages in personal growth and self-actualization».

In short, Rogers saw self-perception as a fluid and evolving construct that can either promote psychological well-being or create distress, depending on the level of congruence between one's experiences and self-concept. Rogers (1961) [14] proposed that self-esteem is an essential part of self-concept, which includes self-worth, self-image, and the ideal self. He suggested that congruence between these aspects leads to higher self-esteem, whereas incongruence results in feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth. Rogers' person-centered theory highlights the importance of positive regard and unconditional positive self-acceptance in the development of healthy self-esteem (Rogers, 1959) [13]. Rogers developed person-centered therapy as a means to improve self-esteem by fostering a supportive environment characterized by empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1957) [12]. This therapeutic approach helps individuals reduce incongruence between their self-concept and experiences. According to Rogers (1961) [15], individuals with high self-esteem experience greater psychological health, including self-acceptance, personal growth, and openness to experiences. They are more likely to engage in self-actualization, a state where they fulfill their

potential and live authentically. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, is linked to anxiety, depression, and difficulties in relationships (Rogers, 1951) [12]

Factors Influencing Self-Perception. Several factors contribute to the formation and development of self-perception, including social interactions, cultural influences, and psychological factors.

➤ **Social Influences.** Family, peers, and societal expectations play a pivotal role in shaping self-perception. Early childhood experiences, feedback from significant others, and social validation all contribute to the way individuals perceive themselves (Harter, 1999) [9]. Social media, in particular, has emerged as a powerful force in shaping self-perception, as individuals often compare themselves to idealized online portrayals (Fardouly et al., 2015) [7]. Peers have a significant impact on self-perception, especially during adolescence. Being accepted, admired, and approved of by peer groups increases an individual's self-confidence and helps them develop a positive self-perception.

➤ **Cultural Influences.** Cultural background significantly affects self-perception. Individualistic cultures, such as those in the United States and Western Europe, emphasize personal achievements and independence, leading to a self-concept centered on autonomy (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) [10]. In contrast, collectivist cultures, such as those in East Asia, promote interdependence and community-oriented self-perception (Triandis, 1995) [19]. Cultural values, beliefs, and norms determine how an individual should view themselves and what behaviors are acceptable.

➤ **Psychological Factors.** Cognitive biases, self-esteem levels, and past experiences shape how individuals perceive themselves. The self-serving bias, for instance, leads people to attribute successes to internal factors while blaming failures on external circumstances (Miller & Ross, 1975) [11]. Additionally, individuals with high self-esteem tend to perceive themselves more positively compared to those with low self-esteem (Baumeister 1999; Baumeister et al., 2003) [1; 2].

Conclusion and Suggestions. Rogers (1959) [14] argued that self-esteem begins to form in early childhood and is significantly influenced by interactions with caregivers. When children receive unconditional positive regard - acceptance and love regardless of their actions - they are more likely to develop high self-esteem. Conversely, conditional positive regard, where love and acceptance are based on meeting certain expectations, can lead to conditions of worth that hinder self-acceptance and lower self-esteem. Carl Rogers' perspective on self-esteem underscores its importance in personal development and mental health. His humanistic approach emphasizes the need for unconditional positive regard and self-acceptance to foster a healthy self-concept. Understanding Rogers' insights can help individuals and therapists promote higher self-esteem and psychological resilience. Self-perception has profound implications for mental health, interpersonal relationships, and professional success. A positive self-perception is associated with higher levels of motivation, resilience, and overall well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000) [6]. Conversely, distorted self-perception can contribute to issues such as social anxiety, depression, and imposter syndrome (Clance & Imes, 1978) [5]. As a result, a healthy sense of self helps us live happier, more successful and more fulfilling lives.

Suggestions. Understanding how self-perception develops and evolves can provide insights into human behavior and inform interventions aimed at promoting positive self-evaluation. We should focus on knowing and accepting ourselves. We should focus on positive thoughts and develop a positive inner voice towards ourselves. We should take care of our physical, emotional and mental health. We should establish supportive relationships and stay away from negative relationships. We should try new things and discover our potential. If necessary, we should not hesitate to seek professional support such as humanistic therapy.

References

1. Baumeister, R. F. (1999). Self-concept, self-esteem, and identity. In V. J. Derlega, B. A. Winstead, & W. H. Jones (Eds.), *Personality: Contemporary theory and research* (2nd ed., pp. 339–375). Nelson-Hall Publishers.
2. Baumeister, R. F., Campbell, J. D., Krueger, J. I. & Vohs, K. D. (2003). Does high self-esteem cause better performance, interpersonal success, happiness, or healthier lifestyles? *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 4(1), 1-44.
3. Bem, D. J. (1972). Self-perception theory. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 6, 1-62.
4. Clay, R. A. (2002). A renaissance for humanistic psychology. The field explores new niches while building on its past. *American Psychological Association Monitor*, 33 (8).
5. Clance, P. R. & Imes, S. A. (1978). The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, 15(3), 241-247.
6. Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The «what» and «why» of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227-268.
7. Fardouly, J., Diedrichs, P. C., Vartanian, L. R., & Halliwell, E. (2015). Social comparisons on social media: The impact of facebook on young women's body image concerns and mood, *Body Image*, 13, 38-45.
8. Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2), 117-140.
9. Harter, S. (1999). *The construction of the self: A developmental perspective*. Guilford Press.
10. Markus, H. R. & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98(2), 224-253.

11. Miller, D. T. & Ross, M. (1975). Self-serving biases in the attribution of causality: Fact or fiction? *Psychological Bulletin*, 82(2), 213-225.
12. Rogers, C. R. (1951). Client-centered therapy: Its current practice, implications and theory. Houghton Mifflin.
13. Rogers, C. R. (1957). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 21(2), 95-103.
14. Rogers, C. R. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships as developed in the client-centered framework. (Ed. In S. Koch). *Psychology: A Study of a Science* (Vol. 3, pp. 184-256). McGraw-Hill.
15. Rogers, C. R. (1961). On becoming a person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy. Houghton Mifflin.
16. Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving the self*. Basic Books.
17. Schacter, D. L., Daniel T. G. & Daniel, M. W. (2011). *Psychology* (2th edition.). New York, Worth Publishers.
18. Triandis, H. C. (1995). *Individualism & collectivism*. Westview Press.
19. Vogel, E. A., Rose, J. P., Roberts, L. R. & Eckles, K. (2014). Social comparison, social media, and self-esteem. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 3(4), 206-222.
20. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/self-perception-theory-definition-and-examples.html#section> Self-Perception Definition (last accessed: 2025/03/09).
21. [https://en.wikipedia.org/Humanistic psychology](https://en.wikipedia.org/Humanistic_psychology) (last accessed: 2025/04/06).