

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE STUDIES**  
**SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY**



The Influence of Peer Pressure on Self-Esteem among Undergraduate Students at Addis Ababa  
University

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**October, 2025**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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Ababa University**

This Thesis is submitted to the College of Education and Language Studies at Addis Ababa  
University, for the Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of The Master of Arts  
Degree in Developmental Psychology

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Advisor: Endalkachew Tesera (phD)

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

### **Declaration**

I, Bethelhem Demissie, the under signed, declare that this thesis entitled: “The Influence of Peer Pressure on Self-Esteem among Undergraduate Students at Addis Ababa University” is my original work. I have undertaken the research work independently with the guidance and support of the research advisor. This study has not been submitted for any degree or diploma program in this or any other institutions and it is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Degree of Masters in Developmental Psychology, the Graduate program of College of Education & Language Studies, Addis Ababa University.

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This is to certify that the research thesis prepared by Bethelhem Demissie, titled “The Influence of Peer Pressure on Self-Esteem Among Undergraduate Students at Addis Ababa University” in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Art (MA) in Developmental Psychology complies with the regulations of the university and confirms to the acceptable standards with the respect to the originality and the quality.

**APPROVED BY BOARD OF EXAMINERS**

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External examiner	Signature
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Internal examiner	Signature
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Head, School of Psychology	Signature

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## Abbreviations

- *AAU* *Addis Ababa University*
- *CI* *Confidence Interval*
- *DF* *Degrees of Freedom*
- *n* *Sample Size*
- *N* *Target Population*
- *p* *Probability Value*
- *PP* *Peer Pressure*
- *r* *Pearson Correlation Coefficient*
- *SD* *Standard Deviation*
- *SE* *Self-Esteem*
- *SPSS* *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*

## Abstract

*This study looked at the influence of peer pressure on self-esteem among undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University using a quantitative approach and a cross-sectional survey design. A systematic sampling technique was employed to select 346 respondents proportionally from three departments. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and regression models. Results revealed that overall peer pressure had a significant negative relationship with self-esteem ( $\beta = -0.424, p < 0.001$ ). When disaggregated by domain, academic peer pressure ( $\beta = 0.497, p < 0.001$ ) was associated with higher self-esteem, while social ( $\beta = -0.235, p < 0.001$ ) and behavioral ( $\beta = -0.181, p < 0.001$ ) pressures were associated with lower self-esteem. Regarding the type of peer pressure experienced, 65% of students reported mainly positive peer pressure, such as motivation, encouragement, and responsibility, while 35% experienced mainly negative peer pressure, such as rejection, risky behaviors, and peer pressure to engage in harmful activities. This distribution highlights that peer pressure is not inherently harmful but depends on its valence and context. The study concludes that academic peer influence can be constructive when framed positively, while negative social and behavioral pressures undermine self-worth. It recommends that universities strengthen peer mentoring programs to channel academic influence into motivation, expand counseling services to address harmful pressures, and promote student-led initiatives that foster supportive peer networks.*

***Keywords: Peer pressure, self-esteem, academic pressure, positive influence, negative influence, social pressure and behavioral pressure***

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Peer pressure generally refers to the feeling that one needs to behave like others of their age or social group in order to fit in or carry a degree of respect, as the Merriam-Webster Dictionary puts it. In university social circles, it goes beyond casual socialization and often shapes how one views oneself, behaves, and aspires (Ayalew, Alemayehu, & Bekele, 2022). Peer pressure may occur through academic competition, social conformity, or lifestyle imitations. Understanding this connection is essential because peer pressure directly affects self-esteem, which in turn plays a crucial role in shaping emotional well-being, academic performance, and mental health (Yimer & Fekadu, 2024).

Peer pressure can have both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, it can motivate students to work harder, engage in productive activities, and adopt healthier lifestyles. On the negative side, it can lead to behaviors that damage well-being, such as substance abuse, academic dishonesty, or risky sexual conduct. Both types of pressure leave a psychological imprint, and their long-term effects on students' mental health are well documented (Parker & Gamm, 2020; Yimer & Fekadu, 2024).

Self-esteem, as conceptualized by Rosenberg (1965), is a person's overall evaluation of their value. One of its major influences is peer relationships. Students with high self-esteem are less likely to succumb to negative peer influences, whereas students with low self-esteem may accede even to harmful expectations from their peers. Recent studies in Ethiopia indicate that

self-esteem not only develops through peer interactions but also acts as a buffer against harmful peer influence (Ayalew et al., 2022; Tadesse, Misbah, & Haile, 2021).

Although self-esteem and peer pressure have been widely studied internationally, few studies examine these factors among Ethiopian university students. Most research relies on Western or Asian samples, which may not reflect Ethiopia's unique cultural and social contexts. Evidence from local studies suggests that students exposed to negative peer pressure exhibit lower self-esteem and higher anxiety, highlighting the need for context-specific research (Tadesse et al., 2021; Ayalew et al., 2022).

Urban-rural inequality also affects susceptibility to peer pressure in Ethiopian universities. Students from urban areas are generally less vulnerable, having been socialized in urban environments before university. Students from rural areas, however, may experience cultural shock and heightened demands to fit in, increasing their risk of poor academic performance, identity confusion, or engagement in risky behaviors (Belay & Tesfaye, 2024; Tadesse et al., 2021).

The rapid expansion of digital technology and social networking platforms has further reshaped peer interactions. Online environments provide new areas for comparison, often intensifying peer pressure through curated images and idealized portrayals. Social media exposure can amplify feelings of inadequacy and lower self-esteem, which is particularly relevant as digital communication becomes an integral part of students' social lives (Yimer & Fekadu, 2024).

Self-esteem, as understood by Rosenberg as a person's general assessment of their value, has numerous influences on it, one of which is peer relationships. Students with high self-esteem are less likely to become subjected to negative influences from their peers, while students with

low self-esteem are likely to accede even to harmful expectations from their group. Kwan and their colleagues noted that high self-esteem minimizes exposure to manipulation from one's peers. It appears as if self-esteem isn't only developed from one's relations with peers but also acts as a buffer from their harmful effects. (Rosenberg, 1965; Baumeister et al., 2003; Kwan et al., 2019)

Whereas both self-esteem and peer pressure are exhaustively studied overseas, few studies define their behavior among university students back home. Most of the research has used Western or Asian participants and cannot mirror the social and cultural settings of students from Ethiopia. Misbah and others found that participants with high exposure to negative peer pressure exhibited low self-esteem and high anxiety and recommended that research needs context specificity. (Brown & Larson, 2009; Baumeister et al., 2003; Misbah et al., 2021)

Urban rural inequality also presents a major problem at university level in Ethiopia. Students from urban areas are less likely to become susceptible to their classmates' pressure as they are socialized and acculturated with urban environments before their university life. However, students from rural areas may face cultural shocks and a demand to fit and are consequently more likely to become susceptible. These students may perform poorly academically, become confused with their identity or resort to high-risk behaviors like drugs or abuse of their classmates. There are a few scholarly research works available pertaining to the process through which specifically rural students face pressure from their classmates and how their self-esteem becomes affected. (Kwan et al., 2019; Misbah et al., 2021)

The rapid expansion of digital technology and social networking platforms in Ethiopia has reshaped how students interact and experience peer influence. These online environments have become new area for comparison, often intensifying pressure through curated images and

idealized portrayals. According to Kuss and Griffiths (2017), such social media exposure can amplify feelings of inadequacy and significantly lower self-esteem among young people. This concern is particularly relevant for Ethiopian university students, as digital communication increasingly becomes part of their daily social lives.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Peer pressure is a significant social influence that shapes how students behave, think, and feel about themselves. While many studies have examined its impact on self-esteem, research within the Ethiopian higher education context remains limited, particularly among undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University. Recent studies in Ethiopia indicate that peer group dynamics significantly influence psychological outcomes and self-esteem among university students (Ayalew, Alemayehu, & Bekele, 2022; Tadesse, Misbah, & Haile, 2021).

A methodological gap exists in local research. Most studies on peer pressure and self-esteem in Ethiopia have relied on descriptive or simple correlational designs. While these approaches provide useful insights, they do not fully capture the complex ways peer pressure can influence self-esteem. Advanced analytical techniques, such as multilevel or regression analyses, have rarely been applied. For example, Elfinesh Kebede (2019) explored susceptibility to peer pressure and self-esteem among Ethiopian students but did not account for mediating variables or the impact of digital communication on peer interactions.

Another critical gap is the limited understanding of modern forms of peer pressure that occur through social media and online communication. With rapid expansion of digital technologies in Ethiopia, university students increasingly face online social influences that differ from traditional face-to-face interactions. Recent evidence highlights that social media exposure

can amplify peer pressure and negatively affect self-esteem among young adults (Yimer & Fekadu, 2024; Belay & Tesfaye, 2024).

Examining the relationship between peer pressure and self-esteem is theoretically and practically important. It enhances understanding in adolescent psychology, informs mental health interventions, and helps policymakers and educators design programs that support students' well-being. This study aims to fill these gaps by investigating both positive and negative peer pressure and its association with self-esteem among undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University's Sidist Kilo Campus. The study also considers demographic variables such as gender, age, and year of study while maintaining a focused thematic scope.

### **1.3 Objective of the study**

#### **1.3.1 General Objective**

The general objective of this study is to investigate the influence of peer pressure on self-esteem among undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

- To assess the perceived level of peer pressure experienced by undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University.
- To determine the statistical relationship between overall peer pressure and self-esteem among undergraduate students.
- To identify which specific dimension of peer pressure academic, social, or behavioral has the strongest statistical association with self-esteem.
- To examine how positive and negative peer pressure influence self-esteem among undergraduate students.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What is the perceived level of peer pressure experienced by undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship between peer pressure and self-esteem among undergraduate students?
3. Which specific dimension of peer pressure (academic, social, or behavioral) is most strongly associated with self-esteem?
4. How do positive and negative forms of peer pressure influence self-esteem among undergraduate students?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it provides a clear understanding of how peer pressure affects the self-esteem of undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University. By exploring both positive and negative forms of peer pressure, the study highlights ways students can benefit from supportive peer interactions while recognizing and managing harmful influences. The findings can help university administrators and counselors design programs that promote healthy peer relationships, encourage academic motivation, and reduce risky behaviors.

Educators can use the results to better understand students' social challenges and create learning environments that support self-confidence, personal growth, and emotional well-being. Students themselves can benefit by becoming more aware of how peer dynamics influence their thoughts, behaviors, and self-perception, enabling them to make conscious decisions to strengthen their self-esteem.

Additionally, the study informs policy makers about the importance of integrating mental health services, peer mentoring initiatives, and social support structures into university policies to improve student life and learning outcomes. Beyond immediate practical applications, this research contributes to the broader understanding of student psychology in the Ethiopian higher education context.

By examining the specific ways peer pressure affects self-esteem, the study provides a foundation for future interventions, research, and programs aimed at fostering positive development among university students. Overall, the study benefits multiple stakeholders including students, educators, administrators, and policy makers by offering insights that can enhance both individual well-being and institutional support systems.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The research aims at investigating the connection of peer pressure and self-esteem among Addis Ababa University undergraduate students with particular interest on those learning at Sidist Kilo campus. It gauges both negative and positive types of peer pressure with academic, social, and behavioral aspect and their effects on students' self-esteem. It only covers the populations of undergraduate students and leaves out postgraduates and students from other institutions of higher learning. Also, while gender, age, and study year are considered as a demography aspect of the research target group, broader external influences of society and outcomes of academic performance are excluded so as to limit the scope.

## **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

Whereas this study reveals informative results about the interrelationship of peer pressure and self-esteem of Addis Ababa University undergraduates, a portion of limitations also needs

consideration. First, the study entails a particular university (campus), Sidist Kilo; thus, findings may hardly generalize beyond other university settings or beyond Ethiopia. Secondly, the study has used a measure of self-reported data that may also encounter social desirability bias or inaccurate recall. Thirdly, no longitudinal effects or causality are also considered because the study used a cross-sectional research approach.

## 1.8 Operational Definition of Key Terms

**Peer Pressure:** Peer Pressure means the effect peers have on someone to change their ideas, attitudes, or actions meant to match group norms. It includes both positive and negative forms of impact that can occur in academic, social and behavioral contexts. In this study, peer pressure was measured using the Peer Pressure Scale (PPS) developed by Saini and Singh (2016). This standardized instrument records students self-reported experiences of peer influence and identifies different forms, such as:

- **Academic Peer Pressure:** involves competition, study habits and expectations for academic achievement.
- **Social Peer Pressure:** relates to friendships, appearance, and the need to conform to group norms.
- **Behavioral Peer Pressure:** refers to the adoption of certain habits or behaviors, whether beneficial or risky.

This study considers both the beneficial and adverse effects of peer pressure on students' self-esteem by integrating all these aspects under the broader construct of peer influence.

**Self-esteem:** refers to an individual's overall sense of self-worth or personal value. It is measured through the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), a widely validated self-report instrument designed to assess general levels of self-esteem.

## **Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of the literature on the relationship between peer pressure and self-esteem among university students. It starts by outlining the concept of peer pressure and its various dimensions, followed by a discussion of how it influences students' academic achievement, social interaction, and psychological well-being.

The chapter discusses the way demographic factors of age, gender, and year of study moderate the relationship between peer pressure and self-esteem. Lastly, it establishes gaps in the existing literature, especially in the Ethiopian situation, and defines the scope and contribution of the current study.

### **2.2 Theoretical review**

To understand how peer pressure influences self-esteem among university students, it is essential to use theories that explain the underlying social and psychological processes. Peer pressure is more than just a social influence; it can affect how students see themselves, how they behave, and how they make decisions in their daily lives. Self-esteem, in turn, is shaped by personal experiences and the social environment, influencing students' motivation, confidence, and emotional well-being.

Theoretical frameworks provide a structured way to examine these complex interactions. By applying established theories, researchers can better understand why some students respond positively to peer influence, while others may struggle with negative effects.

Theories such as Social Comparison Theory, Self-Determination Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Identity Development help explain how students' self-perception, motivation, and social learning processes interact with peer pressure.

Using these theories makes it possible to connect individual experiences with broader psychological principles. They guide this study in exploring how peer interactions impact self-esteem within the Ethiopian university context, where cultural norms, group expectations, and social relationships play a significant role.

### **2.2.1 Social Comparison Theory**

Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) posits that individuals evaluate themselves by comparing their abilities, behaviors, and social standing to those of others. Among university students, peer pressure often emerges through these comparisons, affecting self-perception, academic motivation, and social behavior. Recent studies show that students who frequently compare themselves with peers, including online comparisons through social media, experience greater stress and fluctuations in self-esteem (Tegegne, 2022). In collectivist societies such as Ethiopia, where group conformity and social harmony are emphasized, and social comparisons intensify peer influence, making students more vulnerable to both positive and negative peer pressures.

### **2.2.2 Self-Determination Theory**

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) emphasizes three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Peer pressure interacts with these needs, as students may conform to peer expectations to satisfy the need for social connection, sometimes at the expense of personal autonomy. Research in Ethiopian universities suggests that students

with high self-esteem are better able to maintain autonomy, resist harmful peer influences, and pursue personal goals (Ogunsemi, 2025). This theory helps explain why students with stronger self-worth can navigate social pressures more effectively and maintain a healthier sense of self.

### **2.2.3 Social Learning Theory**

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) explains that individuals learn behaviors by observing and imitating others. Peer pressure acts as a mechanism for social learning, where students adopt behaviors modeled by influential peers. Recent evidence indicates that students with lower self-esteem are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as substance use or unsafe social practices, under peer influence (Belihu, 2024). Conversely, observing peers who demonstrate positive behaviors, such as academic diligence or community involvement, can enhance self-esteem and personal growth. Social Learning Theory thus provides a framework to understand both the positive and negative effects of peer influence on students.

### **2.2.4 Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Identity Development**

Erikson's (1968) Psychosocial Theory highlights the stage of identity versus role confusion, which occurs during adolescence and early adulthood. University students are in this stage, where peer interactions significantly shape their sense of identity and self-worth. Positive peer influence reinforces identity formation and strengthens self-esteem, whereas negative peer pressure can result in role confusion, low self-esteem, and engagement in maladaptive behaviors (Belihu, 2024). Erikson's theory emphasizes the importance of developmental context in understanding why peer pressure has a profound impact during the university years.

### **2.2.5 Definition of Peer Pressure**

Peer pressure is the influence that peers exert to encourage conformity to group norms, behaviors, or expectations. It can be either positive or negative, depending on the context and the individual's resilience. Positive peer pressure can motivate students to engage in productive activities, achieve academically, and maintain socially responsible behaviors, while negative peer pressure may lead to harmful habits, risky behaviors, or psychological stress (Tegegne, 2022; Belihu, 2024).

#### **Academic Pressure**

At the university level, peer pressure often appears academically, where students compete for grades, adopt trendy study habits, or follow peers' expectations to excel. Studies show that academic peer pressure can trigger anxiety, stress, and burnout, negatively affecting students' self-esteem and mental health (Ogunsemi, 2025; Tegegne, 2022). Excessive focus on peer comparison in academic performance may push students to overwork themselves, sometimes at the cost of their emotional well-being.

#### **Social Pressure**

Social peer pressure significantly shapes behaviors related to relationships, lifestyle choices, and social activities. While positive social influence can enhance self-esteem, negative social pressure may encourage risky behaviors, such as unsafe relationships or peer conformity that undermines personal values (Belihu, 2024; Kasim et al., 2025). The rise of digital technology and social media has amplified these pressures, as students are exposed to curated images and idealized portrayals of peers' lives, which can increase feelings of inadequacy and lower self-esteem (Tegegne, 2022).

## **Behavioral Pressure**

Behavioral peer pressure often involves lifestyle decisions, including substance use or other unhealthy habits. Research indicates that students with low self-esteem are particularly vulnerable to adopting negative behaviors under peer influence (Belihu, 2024; Kasim et al., 2025). Conversely, observing peers engaging in positive behaviors, such as volunteering or academic diligence, can enhance self-esteem and promote healthy decision-making. These findings emphasize the need for intervention programs that address the diverse effects of peer influence on student behavior and well-being.

### **2.2.6 Definition of Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of their worth, confidence, and capability in everyday life. It shapes how people think about themselves and how they respond to challenges, achievements, and social interactions (Orth & Robins, 2023). University students with higher self-esteem tend to handle stress better, maintain emotional balance, and build healthier relationships with peers (Parker & Gamm, 2020). However, when self-esteem is low, individuals may feel insecure, doubt their abilities, and rely more heavily on peer acceptance for validation (Misbah et al., 2021).

Recent findings show that self-esteem is closely connected with how students cope with academic and social expectations. For instance, Parker and Gamm (2020) noted that strong peer relationships can enhance one's self-worth and act as a protective factor against negative social influences. In contrast, Misbah et al. (2021) found that students with lower self-esteem are more vulnerable to harmful peer pressure, which can lead to emotional stress and risky behaviors.

Self-esteem also plays a vital role in resisting peer influence. Students who feel confident and valued are more likely to stand by their own decisions rather than simply follow their peers (Yang et al., 2022). Meanwhile, individuals with low self-esteem may fear rejection and prefer to blend in with the group, even if it means acting against their personal values (Zhou & Zhang, 2023).

Although the global evidence highlights that self-esteem strongly influences how young people navigate peer pressure and academic demand, there are still limited empirical studies examining this relationship in Ethiopian university contexts (Jemal, 2024). Understanding this gap is crucial because cultural expectations, social support systems, and university environments in Ethiopia may shape students' self-esteem differently than in Western or Asian settings.

In summary, self-esteem is both a personal strength and a psychological safeguard. It not only affects how students interact with their peers but also mediates whether peer pressure leads to positive development or harmful outcomes.

### **2.2.7 The Role of Self-Esteem in Academic Achievement**

Self-esteem plays an important role in how students approach their academic work and handle academic challenges. Students with high self-esteem are typically more confident, motivated, and willing to participate in learning activities that push them to grow academically. In contrast, students with lower self-esteem may fear failure, avoid difficult tasks, and show reduced engagement in their studies (Yang et al., 2022).

Kwan et al. (2019) explained that students with higher self-esteem are more resilient and better able to resist negative peer influence that might harm their academic progress. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2023) found that self-esteem significantly predicts better grades, stronger

classroom participation, and improved problem-solving skills among university students. These findings suggest that strengthening students' self-esteem may contribute to improving both academic outcomes and overall psychological well-being.

### **2.2.8 Self-Esteem and Mental Health**

Self-esteem is closely linked to mental health. Students with low self-esteem often experience higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, especially in highly competitive academic settings (Orth & Robins, 2023). Misbah et al. (2021) emphasized that low self-esteem increases a person's dependence on peer approval, which can worsen emotional distress when social acceptance is lacking.

Moreover, Parker and Gamm (2020) noted that supportive peer relationships can enhance self-esteem and protect students from negative emotional outcomes. However, when self-esteem is already low, students are more likely to engage in harmful behaviors or withdraw socially, which can further contribute to mental health challenges (Zhou & Zhang, 2023).

These findings indicate that interventions promoting self-esteem at the university level not only improve emotional well-being but also reduce the negative influence of peer pressure.

### **2.2.9 The Relationship between Peer Pressure and Self-Esteem**

It is not quite simple for peer pressure and self-esteem to interact with one another. It can be seen in research that peer pressure can contribute to or detract from self-esteem, depending upon the quality of the influence.

#### **Positive Peer Influence**

Positive peer groups that encourage effort, respect, and healthy habits help students build confidence and feel valued in their social environment. Parker and Gamm (2020) found that

students who experience supportive peer interactions show greater improvements in self-esteem and well-being. Likewise, Kwan et al. (2019) revealed that positive peer reinforcement strengthens self-beliefs and encourages students to stay focused on their academic and personal goals.

### **Negative Peer Influence**

Negative peer pressure, on the other hand, can damage a student's self-esteem. When students feel forced to engage in unsafe behaviors or adopt certain attitudes, they often lose their sense of self-worth. Misbah et al. (2021) reported that individuals experiencing strong negative peer pressure tend to have lower self-esteem and higher levels of anxiety, highlighting the need for interventions to counter these effects.

Similarly, Bowers et al. (2020) found that negative peer pressure can harm self-esteem by encouraging unhealthy behaviors, especially in environments where conforming to such norms is seen as necessary for social acceptance.

### **Cultural Contexts**

The impact of peer pressure on self-esteem can also vary across different cultural backgrounds. In collectivist societies like Ethiopia, peer pressure tends to be stronger due to the emphasis on group conformity (Khan et al., 2022). Understanding these cultural factors is important for designing interventions that address the specific needs of students. Leung et al. (2019) found that cultural values shape how individuals experience and respond to peer pressure. In such collective cultures, people may be more vulnerable to negative influences because maintaining group harmony is often prioritized over personal preferences. Effective interventions should take cultural values into consideration.

### **2.2.6 The Role of Demographic Factors**

Demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and year of study contribute to differences in how students perceive peer pressure and develop self-esteem. Understanding these differences helps educators tailor psychological and academic support to the diverse needs of university students.

#### **Gender Difference**

Gender shapes both the type and intensity of peer pressure that student's experience. Recent research indicates that young women face stronger social pressures related to appearance, social approval, and online image presentation, which can create fluctuations in self-esteem (Lee & Chen, 2022). In contrast, male students more frequently encounter pressure related to dominance, competition, and risk-taking behaviors, which influence self-esteem differently (Khan et al., 2023).

Misbah et al. (2021) further showed that women are more likely to internalize negative peer judgment, making them more vulnerable to declines in self-esteem. These findings suggest that support programs addressing peer influence should consider gender-specific forms of pressure to effectively strengthen students' well-being.

#### **Age and Development Stage**

Age and the progression through university life also influence students' susceptibility to peer pressure. Younger university students are often in a strong identity-seeking phase, making peer acceptance more important than personal values or goals (Parker & Gamm, 2020). This can increase the likelihood of self-esteem being shaped by peer approval.

Additionally, university year level affects the nature of pressures students' experience. Kwan et al. (2019) found that first-year students are more sensitive to social integration pressures, while upper-year students report more academic and career-related peer influence. As students mature, they typically develop stronger autonomy, which helps reduce the negative effects of peer pressure on self-esteem (Ahmed et al., 2023).

### **2.2.7 Gaps in the Literature**

Despite a large body of research globally, there are still several gaps that remain unaddressed. Most research is Western-oriented and thus has little relevance to the Ethiopian situation. Kwan et al. (2019) give valuable insights but do not account for collectivist cultural norms that may escalate peer influence.

There is also scarce literature on how individual elements of peer pressure academic, social, behavioral engage with self-esteem in Ethiopia university contexts. Cultural values like social harmony and conformity to the group may modified these relationships (Khan et al., 2022; Leung et al., 2019)

The absence of Ethiopian-based research on peer pressure and self-esteem is an evident research gap. The current study, therefore, seeks to adders the gap through an investigation of the concepts in Addis Ababa University, providing culturally sensitive information.

## **2.3 Empirical review**

A number of empirical studies have explored the interconnection between peer pressure and self-esteem among adolescents and university students. Although differing in scope, methodology, and culture, together they provide a picture of how psychological well-being is affected by peer pressure.

Kasim et al. (2025) surveyed Malaysian university students via standardized tools for the measurement of peer pressure and self-esteem. The findings showed a strong negative correlation between susceptibility to peer influence and self-esteem level. The students with lower self-esteem were more prone to conforming peers, particularly in social and behavior situations. Although information from the research is helpful, its cultural background varies from that in Ethiopia where collectivist beliefs may increase peer influence and change its psychological effects.

In Tunisia, Ketata et al. (2021) conducted a survey of over 1,000 university students and found that nearly one-third of them had low self-esteem. As the study was not focused on peer pressure, researchers identified several causative factors such as low-income levels, sickness, and insufficient leisure activities that interact with peer dynamics. The study suggests that self-esteem is shaped by several environmental stressors, such as peer relationships, but more research would be required to control for such influences.

Kebede (2019) analyzed the relationship between peer pressure and the self-esteem of students at Ambo University in Ethiopia. The research concluded that low self-esteem students were more susceptible to negative peer pressure, especially in behavioral dimensions such as drug abuse and conformity to society. This study is particularly relevant to the current research because it highlights the cultural and institutional context of higher education in Ethiopia. However, it did not differentiate between types of peer pressure or examine their specific effects on self-esteem.

Some studies have considered demographic factors. For example, Prins et al. (2018) found that female students tend to internalize peer pressure, which can lead to differences in self-esteem based on social acceptance.

These findings suggest that age and gender may moderate the relationship between peer pressure and self-esteem, although cultural context remains an important factor. Despite the value of these studies, certain limitations still exist.

The majorities of them are conducted on cross-sectional design and self-report scales, which limit cause-and-effect inferences and can introduce bias. Moreover, few studies have explored the multidimensional nature of peer pressure academic, social, and behavioral or its interplay with self-esteem in non-Western societies. There appears to be a call for research that is context-based and fills the above-mentioned gaps in order to give culture-specific information.

This current research attempts to construct on this empirical base through an emphasis on how various peer pressure forms influence self-esteem levels among Addis Ababa University undergraduate students. By examining a specific sample and holding demographic variables constant, the research attempts to take the discussion further towards more refined peer dynamics within Ethiopian higher education.

## **2.4 Conceptual framework**

This study is grounded in the understanding that peer pressure is a multidimensional social influence that can shape students' self-esteem both positively and negatively. In this research model, peer pressure serves as the independent variable, while self-esteem functions as the dependent variable. Peer pressure is examined in three major domains: academic, social, and behavioral contexts.

Academic peer pressure refers to peers' influence on students' academic engagement, performance expectations, and competition, which can either motivate achievement or contribute to stress and reduced confidence (Parker & Gamm, 2020).

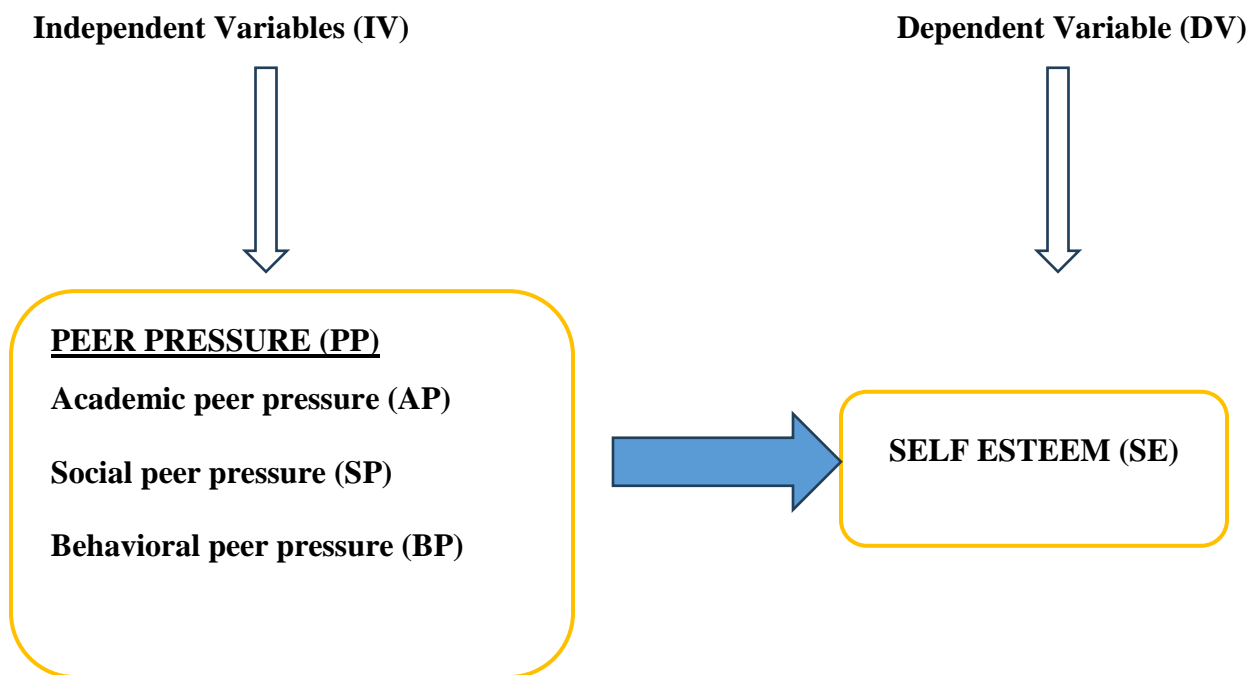
Social peer pressure involves conformity to group norms and expectations in interpersonal interaction; although positive social inclusion may strengthen self-worth, rejection or social coercion may damage psychological well-being (Khan et al., 2023).

Behavioral peer pressure concerns peer influence on lifestyle and conduct, potentially promoting constructive behavior or encouraging risky habits that increase vulnerability to reduced self-esteem (Misbah et al., 2021).

Each of these domains can be expressed as either positive or negative influence: positive peer pressure fosters acceptance, success, and emotional support, while negative peer pressure contributes to anxiety, self-doubt, and engagement in harmful behaviors (Kwan et al., 2019).

The dependent variable, self-esteem, is defined as students' general evaluation of their self-worth, and is expected to vary based on the type and intensity of peer influence they experience. Accordingly, this study conceptualizes that academic, social, and behavioral peer pressures each have the potential to enhance or diminish the self-esteem of undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University.

As shown in Figure 2.1. It gives a framework to study the relation of varied kinds of peer pressure to self-esteem, to direct data collection, statistical analysis, and interpretation in a quantitative research context.



*Figure 2-1 Conceptual framework*  
*Source: Own Survey, 2025*

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The research employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the influence of peer pressure on self-esteem among undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University. The cross-sectional design enabled the collection of data from a defined population at a single point in time. The quantitative approach allowed for the use of descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression analysis to assess the relationships between peer pressure, its sub-dimensions, and self-esteem.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

This study employed a deductive research approach, which proceeds from general assumptions to specific observations. The approach was appropriate because the study aimed to test pre-established assumptions about the relationship between peer pressure and self-esteem among undergraduate students.

The deductive approach allows the use of structured data collection instruments and objective measurement of variables. Through this method, data were gathered from participants and analyzed statistically to determine the strength and direction of relationships between the variables.

This approach ensured logical progression, precision, and consistency in interpreting results. It also aligned well with the quantitative design of the study, as it emphasizes numerical data, statistical analysis, and evidence-based conclusions about the target population.

### **3.3 Population and Sampling**

#### **3.3.1 Study Site**

This study was conducted at Addis Ababa University Sidist Kilo Campus, one of the leading higher education institutions in Ethiopia. The university is located in the capital city, Addis Ababa, which is a diverse and densely populated urban center. Addis Ababa University provides a rich environment for academic, social, and cultural interactions, making it an appropriate setting to examine peer-related experiences.

The study specifically focused on undergraduate students enrolled across various colleges and departments within the university. The campus setting offers frequent peer interactions both inside and outside the classroom, allowing students to encounter a range of academic, social, and behavioral influences. Therefore, the university provided a suitable context for exploring how peer pressure affects students' self-esteem in their daily academic and social lives.

#### **3.3.2 Target Population Description**

The research was conducted at Addis Ababa University, Main Campus (Sidist Kilo). The target population included all 1,631 undergraduate students enrolled during the academic year 2025, across five colleges.

#### **3.3.3 Sampling Technique**

To ensure the sample accurately represented the diversity of the student body at Addis Ababa University's Sidist Kilo Campus, a systematic sampling technique was applied. The target population consisted of 1,631 undergraduate students distributed across five colleges as shown in Table 3.1, The list of students, including department and gender, was obtained from the AAU Registrar Office.

**Table 3-1 Distribution of Students by College and Gender**

<b>College</b>	<b>Female (F)</b>	<b>Male (M)</b>	<b>Total</b>
College of Humanities Language Studies, Journalism and communication	159	148	307
College of Education and Behavioral Studies (CEBS)	134	93	227
College of Law and Governance Studies	194	196	390
SB College of Performing and Visual Arts	43	51	94
College of Social Sciences	322	291	613
<b>Total</b>	<b>852</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>1631</b>

*Source: A.A. University, 2025*

From the five colleges, three were selected using systematic sampling. A systematic sampling technique was used to select a representative sample. Systematic sampling is practical when using an ordered list of the population and reduces selection bias compared to simple random sampling. The sampling interval is calculated as

$$\text{Sampling Interval} = \text{Sample Size} / \text{Total Colleges} = 5 / 3 = 2$$

This means every 2nd college was selected. A random starting point was chosen between 1 and 2. For example, if the starting point is 1, the selection was:

1. **1st college:** College of Humanities Language Studies, Journalism and communication
2. **3rd college:** College of Law and Governance Studies
3. **5th college:** College of Social Sciences

Within these three colleges, there are 11 departments across the selected colleges. The breakdown is as follows:

**Table 3-2 Departments within the Three Selected Colleges**

College	Department	Female	Male	Total
College of Humanities Language Studies, Journalism and communication	Department of Linguistics	2	4	6
	Department of Oromo Language, Literature & Folklore	9	15	24
	Department of Amharic Language, Literature & Folklore	5	12	17
	Foreign Languages and Literature	30	46	76
	School of Journalism and Communications	113	71	184
College of Law and Governance Studies	School of Law	194	196	390
College of Social Sciences	Department of Geography & Environmental Studies	1	13	14
	Department of Archeology & Heritage Management	1	1	2
	Department of Political Science & International Relations	128	141	269
	Department of Sociology	88	37	125
	School of Social Work	104	99	203
Total		675	635	1310

*Source: own survey, 2025*

One department from each of the Colleges of Education and Behavioral Studies and Humanities were chosen by simple random sampling, while the Bachelor of Law program was selected purposively as it is the sole department in the College of Law and Governance Studies.

### 3.3.4 Sample Size Determination

The required sample size for the quantitative component was determined using Cochran's formula for estimating a population proportion, with the following assumptions:

- Confidence level: 95% ( $z = 1.96$ )
- Expected proportion:  $p = 0.5$  (maximum variability)
- Margin of error:  $e = 0.05$ .

**Initial sample size (Cochran's formula):**

$$\frac{n_o = z^2 \times p \times (1-p)}{e^2} = \frac{n_o = 1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times (0.5)}{(0.05)^2} = 384$$

**Finite population correction (FPC):**

Because the study population for the entire campus is finite (N = 1,631 undergraduate students at Sidist Kilo Campus), applied the finite population correction:

$$n = \frac{n_o}{1 + \frac{n_o - 1}{N}} = n = \frac{384.16}{1 + \frac{384.16 - 1}{1631}} = 310.975 \approx 311$$

**Adjustment for non-response:**

To allow for non-response or incomplete questionnaires, a 10% non-response rate is applied:

$$n_{\text{final}} = \frac{1}{1 - \text{non response rate}} = \frac{311}{1 - 0.10} = \frac{311}{0.90} = 345.56 \approx 346 \text{ participants (final required sample size).}$$

**Proportional allocation to the three selected departments:**

The three selected departments have the following student populations (as provided):

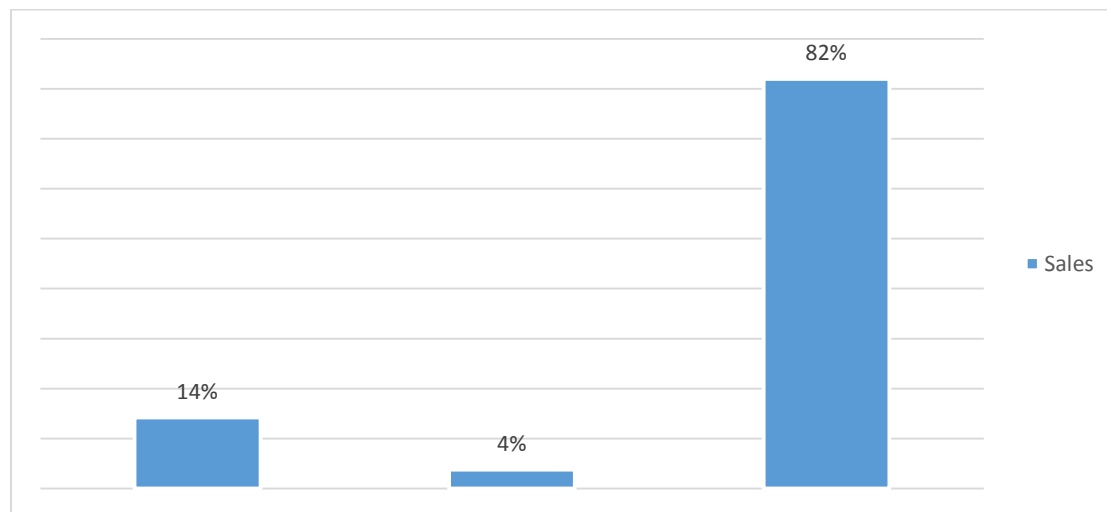
- Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Communication (Multimedia) = 55;
- Department of Geography & Environmental Studies = 14;
- Bachelor of Law = 318.
- Total = 387.

The final sample (n = 346) is allocated proportionally by department size:

***Table 3-3 Sample Size Allocation***

Department	Population(N□ )		Sample(n□ )
Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Communication (Multimedia)	55	346*(55/387)	49
Department of Geography & Environmental Studies	14	346*(14/387)	13
Bachelor of Law	318	346*(318/387)	284
Total	387		346

*Source: own Survey, 2025*



**Figure 3 1 Sample Size Allocation**

### **Inclusion Criteria**

The inclusion criteria for this study required that participants be registered undergraduate students currently enrolled at Addis Ababa University, Sidist Kilo Campus. Eligible participants were those who had completed at least one year in one of the selected academic programs, specifically the Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Communication (Multimedia), the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, or the School of Law. Additionally, participants were required to be 18 years of age or older and willing to voluntarily provide informed consent prior to participation.

### **3.4 Data Collection Instruments**

To collect the required data, used a structured questionnaire consisting of three sections: the first gathered socio-demographic information of participants; the second measured students' peer pressure experiences using the Peer Pressure Scale (PPSQ) Saini and Singh (2016), across academic, social, behavioral, positive, and negative dimensions; and the third assessed students' self-esteem levels using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), a standardized psychological instrument designed to generate quantitative data for statistical analysis.

#### **3.4.1 Peer Pressure Scale Questionnaire (PPSQ)**

The Peer Pressure Scale Questionnaire was adapted from the revised instrument developed by Saini and Singh (2016) to measure susceptibility to peer influence. The tool consists of 25 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Items were grouped into five sub-dimensions:

The original scale demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with a reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.946. In the current study, the adapted version was reviewed by a developmental psychology expert and conducted pilot test to ensure cultural relevance and clarity for the Ethiopian university context.

#### **3.4.2 Self-Esteem Scale (SES)**

Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), a widely used and validated instrument developed by Rosenberg (1965). The scale includes 10 items; each rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The RSES assesses global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. It has

been extensively used in cross-cultural research and is considered reliable for adolescent and young adult populations.

### 3.4.3 Tool Translation and Validation

A pilot study was conducted with 15 undergraduate students to assess the reliability and clarity of the instruments. The results of the Cronbach's alpha reliability test are summarized below:

*Table 3-4 Cronbach's Alphas Reliability for the Pilot Study*

Scale	Number of items	Reliability coefficient for original scale	Reliability coefficient for pilot study
SE	10	0.860	0.820
PP	25	0.917	0.946

The reliability coefficients obtained in the pilot study confirmed that both instruments were internally consistent and suitable for use in the main data collection phase.

S/N	Reliability Test by Item-Total Statistics	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Academic Pressure (AP)</b>	<b>Peer</b>	
1	I feel pressured to perform well academically because my peers expect it.	0.890
2	I study more when I see my classmates working hard.	0.887
3	I prioritize certain elective courses or academic activities because my peers value them.	0.883
4	I feel anxious when my academic performance is lower than my peers.	0.892
5	I participate in group study sessions mainly to avoid being left out.	0.885
<b>Subscale Reliability (Academic Peer Pressure)</b>		<b>0.879</b>

S/N	Reliability Test by Item-Total Statistics	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Social Peer Pressure (SP)</b>		
6	I attend social events mainly because my friends do.	0.882
7	I feel the need to dress or act like my peers to be accepted.	0.879
8	I follow social trends to avoid feeling excluded.	0.881
9	I feel uncomfortable when I don't participate in group activities.	0.884
10	I change my opinions or preferences to match those of my social circle.	0.880
<b>Subscale Reliability (Social Peer Pressure)</b>		<b>0.868</b>
<b>Behavioral Peer Pressure (BP)</b>		
11	I have tried new habits or behaviors because my peers encouraged me.	0.886
12	I sometimes act against my personal values to fit in with my peer group.	0.882
13	I feel compelled to behave in ways that match my friends' expectations.	0.884
14	I have changed my lifestyle due to peer influence.	0.888
15	I imitate the behavior of peers even when I'm unsure about it.	0.885
<b>Subscale Reliability (Behavioral Peer Pressure)</b>		<b>0.879</b>
<b>Positive Peer Pressure (PP)</b>		
16	My peers motivate me to set academic goals.	0.889
17	I engage in healthy habits because of peer encouragement.	0.883
18	I feel supported by my peers to make good decisions.	0.887
19	Peer influence has helped me improve my time management.	0.890
20	I am inspired by my peers to work hard and stay focused.	0.888
<b>Subscale Reliability (Positive Peer Pressure)</b>		<b>0.866</b>

S/N	Reliability Test by Item-Total Statistics	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Negative Peer Pressure (NP)</b>		
21	I have felt pressured to engage in risky behaviors (e.g., drink alcohol, smoke, chew khat, etc.).	0.884
22	I sometimes compromise my values to avoid rejection.	0.881
23	I feel isolated when I refuse to follow peer norms.	0.879
24	Peer pressure has led me to make decisions I later regretted.	0.887
25	I have felt pressured to hide my true opinions to fit in with my peers.	0.889
<b>Subscale Reliability (Negative Peer Pressure)</b>		<b>0.877</b>
<b>Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg's SE)</b>		
26	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	0.810
27	At times I think I am no good at all.	0.805
28	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	0.812
29	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	0.807
30	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	0.818
31	I certainly feel useless at times.	0.811
32	I feel that I'm a person of worth.	0.809
33	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	0.820
34	All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.	0.808
35	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	0.815
<b>Subscale Reliability (Self-Esteem)</b>		<b>0.820</b>
<b>Overall Reliability (All 35 Items)</b>		<b>0.917</b>

Source: own survey, 2025 based on SPSS version 27 software

### **3.5 Data Collection Procedures**

The study gathered data through closed-ended questionnaires. Before the data was gathered, participants had a brief instruction on how to complete the questionnaire. Utilizing a self-administered format, oversaw students who finished the questionnaire in their usual classrooms to gather the data. Between five and ten minutes per student were available to complete one survey.

A Google Forms copy of the questionnaire was given to students unable to finish it in person along with the paper based distribution. The online version's material and structure were the same as those of the printed one. Deadlines and clear directions were given, and follow-up reminders were sent to promote prompt replies. Online submissions were automatically logged in a protected spreadsheet connected to the account to guarantee data access and correctness. Two trained assistance helped in the distribution and collection procedure.

Read all replies for thoroughness and clarity following every round of data gathering. Flagged inconsistent or vaguely completed questionnaires, and, if at all possible, sought for clarifications. There were 346 valid numerical replies collected overall for analysis.

### **3.6 Data Analysis Techniques**

The collected data were entered, coded, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 27). The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) to summarize participant characteristics and responses. To examine relationships between variables, Pearson correlation was employed, while simple and multiple linear regression models were applied to assess the predictive influence of peer pressure and its sub-dimensions on self-esteem.

### **3.6.1 Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistics were used to examine the levels of peer pressure and self-esteem among undergraduate students. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each sub-variable of peer pressure (academic, social, behavioral, positive, and negative), measured on a 5-point Likert scale. In addition, frequency and percentage distributions were used to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

### **3.6.2 Inferential Analysis**

#### **3.6.2.1 Correlation Analysis**

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between peer pressure and self-esteem. This technique is appropriate for continuous variables measured at the interval level. The analysis tested whether a statistically significant association exists between the two constructs, thereby addressing Specific Objective 2 of the study.

#### **3.6.2.2 Linear Regressions**

To further explore the predictive relationship between peer pressure and self-esteem, both simple and multiple linear regression analyses were conducted:

- The simple linear regression examined the overall effect of peer pressure on self-esteem.
- The multiple regression model assessed the individual contributions of five peer pressure dimensions (academic, social, behavioral, positive, and negative) to self-esteem.

Regression analysis is a statistical technique used to investigate and model the relationship between variables (Montgomery, Peck, & Vining, 2012). In its simplest form,

simple linear regression involves one independent variable ( $x$ ) and one dependent variable ( $y$ ), expressed as:

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1x + \varepsilon$$

Where  $\beta_0$  is the intercept,  $\beta_1$  is the slope, and  $\varepsilon$  is the error term. When more than one independent variable is involved, the model becomes a multiple linear regression, represented as:

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \dots + \beta_kx_k + \varepsilon$$

Before conducting the regression analysis, standard assumptions were considered to ensure the reliability and validity of the results. These include the normality of the distribution, independence of residuals, and absence of multicollinearity among predictor variables.

## I. Normality of the distribution

Before conducting multiple regression analysis, the assumption of normality was assessed to ensure the validity of parametric statistical procedures. According to Mordkoff (2000), the assumption of normality refers to the shape of the sampling distribution of the mean, rather than the distribution of individual observations. Parametric tests such as regression rely on this assumption, particularly in relation to skewness and kurtosis values.

As shown in Table 3.5, the skewness values for all five Peer pressure sub-variables ranged from 0.136 to 0.002, while kurtosis values ranged from  $-1.280$  to  $-1.209$ . Although the kurtosis values are slightly below the conventional threshold of  $-1.0$ , they remain within an acceptable range for large samples ( $N = 346$ ), and do not indicate severe deviations from normality. The skewness values are all well within the acceptable range of  $-1.0$  to  $+1.0$ , indicating symmetrical distributions.

*Table 3-5 Normality Distribution*

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			Std. Error		Std. Error
Academic Pressure	346	-0.095	0.131	-1.223	0.261
Social Pressure	346	-0.126	0.131	-1.268	0.261
Behavioral Pressure	346	-0.102	0.131	-1.229	0.261
Positive Pressure	346	-0.136	0.131	-1.209	0.261
Negative Pressure	346	0.002	0.131	-1.280	0.261

## II. Independency of Residuals

To test the assumption of independence of residuals, the Durbin Watson statistic was used. This statistic assesses the presence of autocorrelation in the residuals of the regression model. A value close to 2 indicates that the residuals are independent and that there is no

significant autocorrelation. In this study, the Durbin Watson value was 1.963, which falls within the acceptable range (1.5 to 2.5). Therefore, the assumption of independence of residuals is satisfied.

***Table 3-6 Independency of Residuals***

<b>Model Summary</b>		
<b>Model</b>	<b>Std. Error of the Estimate</b>	<b>Durbin-Watson</b>
1	0.08604	1.963

*Note: Dependent Variable= Self Esteem*

### **III. Assessment of Multicollinearity**

Multicollinearity refers to a situation where independent variables in a regression model are highly correlated, which can distort the interpretation of regression coefficients. According to Klein (1962), Greene (2000), and Freund & Littell (2000), multicollinearity is considered problematic when Tolerance values fall below 0.10 and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values exceed 10.

As shown in Table 3.7, the Tolerance values for all predictors academic pressure (0.986), social pressure (0.973), behavioral pressure (0.975), positive pressure (0.986), and negative pressure (0.984) are well above the 0.10 threshold. Similarly, the VIF values for all variables range from 1.014 to 1.027, which are far below the critical value of 10

**Table 3-7 Collinearity Statistics**

<b>Model</b>	<b>predictor</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Tolerance</b>	<b>VIF</b>
1	Constant	0.000		
	Academic Pressure	0.000	0.986	1.014
	Social Pressure	0.000	0.973	1.027
	Behavioral Pressure	0.000	0.975	1.025
	Positive Pressure	0.000	0.986	1.015
	Negative Pressure	0.000	0.984	1.016

All predictor variables were entered simultaneously into the regression equation. This approach is suitable when the goal is to determine how multiple independent variables jointly and individually predict a single dependent variable. The regression models were evaluated using unstandardized coefficients (B), standardized Beta values, R and R<sup>2</sup> statistics, and significance levels (p-values).

### **3.7 Validity and Reliability**

The reliability and validity of research instruments were stringently examined to allow for significant interpretation of data. Validity is the degree to which the instrument is measuring what it should be measuring, and reliability is the ability to obtain the same results when the instrument is repeatedly used under the same conditions. Internal consistency of the Likert- scale questionnaire items was determined by Cronbach's alpha coefficient in SPSS in this study. Cronbach's alpha is appropriate for tools that lack right or wrong responses, such as rating scales, and reliability is higher for values approaching 1.0.

*Table 3-8 Reliability test*

<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
0.917	0.917	35

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

This study carefully considered ethical issues throughout the research process. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant authorities at Addis Ababa University, Sidist Kilo Campus, and respondents were fully informed about the purpose of the study.

Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were assured that their information would remain confidential and anonymous. Privacy was respected at all stages, and no deception was involved.

Participants were also informed about any potential risks, such as discomfort when answering sensitive questions, and were reassured that they could skip any questions or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. The study was conducted solely for academic purposes, ensuring the protection and well-being of all participants.

## **Chapter Four: Results**

### **4.1 Response Rate**

The overall number of questionnaires sent to the chosen respondents was 346. Out of them, 346 questionnaires were accurately filled up and submitted, and the response rate was 100%. Such a response rate is highly satisfactory for survey research and ensures reliability and validity of the findings.

### **4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

The analysis and descriptive statistics of the demographic variables of the respondents in the current study are presented in this section.

Table 4.1 presents the demographic profile of the 346 undergraduate students who participated in the study. The population consisted of 210 males (60.7%) and 136 females (39.3%) reflecting a reasonably balanced gender distribution, a significant majority living in urban areas (74.6%). The majority of the respondents were following the Bachelor of Law course (82%), but smaller percentages were from the Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Communication (Multimedia) (14.2%) and Department of Geography & Environmental Studies (3.8%). Distribution across years studied was relatively even, at 30.9% second year, 31.8% third year, and 37.3% fourth year. This diverse demographic setup provides a solid foundation to examine peer pressure on self-esteem in different social and academic environments.

**Table 4-1 Demographic profile of respondents (n = 346)**

<b>Profile of respondents</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>(%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	210	60.7
	Female	136	39.3
<b>Year Level</b>	2 years	107	30.9
	3 years	110	31.8
	4 years	129	37.3
<b>Department</b>	Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Communication (Multimedia)	49	14.2
	Department of Geography & Environmental Studies	13	3.8
	Bachelor of Law	284	82
<b>Family Income Level</b>	Low	122	35.3
	Medium	111	32.1
	High	112	32.4
<b>Family Educational Level</b>	Unable to read and write	54	15.6
	Able to read and write	79	22.8
	Elementary - Junior School Completed	72	20.8
	Secondary School Completed	75	21.7
	Above Secondary	66	19.1
<b>Residential Background</b>	Urban	258	74.6
	Rural	88	25.4

*Source: own survey, 2025 based on SPSS version 27 software*

### 4.3 Analysis of the Research Findings

#### 4.3.1 Descriptive Statistics

In this study, descriptive statistics were used as a way to examine the frequency, mean and standard deviation of the sample respondents of AAU students that are relevant in the raw data.

**Table 4-2 The mean & standard deviation of peer influence sub variables**

<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Academic Pressure	346	3.520	0.573
Social Pressure	346	2.543	0.580
Behavioral Pressure	346	2.546	0.575
Positive Pressure	346	4.359	0.452
Negative Pressure	346	1.979	0.648

*Source: own survey, 2025 based on SPSS version 27 software*

To provide a more detailed understanding of peer pressure, Table 4.3 presents the descriptive statistics for each item within the five peer pressure subscales and the self-esteem scale. This includes the number of respondents (N), mean, and standard deviation for each item.

**Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics of Peer Pressure and Self-Esteem Items (N = 346)**

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
<b>Academic Peer Pressure (AP)</b>				
1	I feel pressured to perform well academically because my peers expect it.	346	3.53	1.098
2	I study more when I see my classmates working hard.	346	3.19	1.206
3	I prioritize certain courses or majors based on peer influence.	346	2.84	1.012
4	I feel anxious when my academic performance is lower than my peers.	346	3.39	1.160
5	I participate in group study sessions mainly to avoid being left out.	346	2.77	1.067
<b>Social Peer Pressure (SP)</b>				
6	I attend social events mainly because my friends do.	346	3.24	1.102
7	I feel the need to dress or act like my peers to be accepted.	346	3.31	1.269
8	I follow social trends to avoid feeling excluded.	346	2.83	1.164
9	I feel uncomfortable when I don't participate in group activities.	346	3.71	0.922
10	I change my opinions or preferences to match those of my social circle.	346	3.04	1.072
<b>Behavioral Peer Pressure (BP)</b>				
11	I have tried new habits or behaviors because my peers encouraged me.	346	3.11	1.260
12	I sometimes act against my personal values to fit in with my peer group.	346	2.71	1.007
13	I feel compelled to behave in ways that match my friends' expectations.	346	2.84	1.210
14	I have changed my lifestyle due to peer influence.	346	3.04	1.179

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
15	I imitate the behavior of peers even when I'm unsure about it.	346	3.22	0.986
<b>Positive Peer Pressure (PP)</b>				
16	My peers motivate me to set academic goals.	346	3.69	1.154
17	I engage in healthy habits because of peer encouragement.	346	3.36	1.147
18	I feel supported by my peers to make good decisions.	346	3.57	0.982
19	Peer influence has helped me improve my time management.	346	3.16	1.091
20	I am inspired by my peers to work hard and stay focused.	346	3.33	1.249
<b>Negative Peer Pressure (NP)</b>				
21	I have felt pressured to engage in risky behaviors (e.g., substance use).	346	3.00	0.985
22	I sometimes compromise my values to avoid rejection.	346	2.75	1.088
23	I feel isolated when I refuse to follow peer norms.	346	2.75	0.777
24	Peer pressure has led me to make decisions I later regretted.	346	3.35	1.125
25	I have felt pressured to hide my true opinions to fit in with my peers.	346	2.54	0.854
<b>Self-Esteem Scale (SE)</b>				
26	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	346	2.97	0.812
27	At times I think I am no good at all.	346	2.17	0.771
28	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	346	3.34	0.909
29	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	346	2.89	0.923
30	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	346	1.94	0.841
31	I certainly feel useless at times.	346	2.46	0.913
32	I feel that I'm a person of worth.	346	3.38	0.782
33	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	346	2.69	0.754
34	All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.	346	2.21	0.781
35	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	346	3.35	0.905

Table 4.2 presents descriptive statistics of the peer pressure domains measured on a 5- point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to “strongly disagree” and 5 to “strongly agree.” Following Zaidaton & Bagheri’s (2009) categorization, mean scores below 3.39 are considered low, 3.40–3.79 moderate, and above 3.80 high.

Among the domains, academic peer pressure recorded a moderate-to-high mean score ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 0.57$ ), indicating that students frequently experience academically oriented peer influence such as shared study habits, performance expectations, and competition. This suggests that academic peer dynamics are a salient and often constructive feature of the AAU undergraduate experience. By contrast, social peer pressure ( $M = 2.54$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ) and behavioral peer pressure ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = 0.57$ ) both fell in the low category, showing that students generally disagreed with items reflecting conformity-based or risky peer influence in these domains. This may reflect either a resilient student population or a campus environment that discourages coercive social and behavioral pressures.

When responses were further examined by valence, approximately 65% of students reported experiencing positive peer pressure (e.g., encouragement, responsibility, motivation), while 35% reported negative peer pressure (e.g., rejection, risky behaviors). This distribution demonstrates that peer influence at AAU is not uniformly harmful; rather, its impact depends on whether the pressure is expressed positively or negatively within each domain.

Table 4.3 presents descriptive statistics of the peer pressure and self-esteem items measured on a 5- point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to “strongly disagree” and 5 to “strongly agree.” Following Zaidaton & Bagheri’s (2009) categorization, mean scores below 3.39 are considered low, 3.40–3.79 moderate, and above 3.80 high.

Among the peer pressure domains, Academic Peer Pressure (AP) recorded a moderate mean score ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ), suggesting that students often experience academically oriented peer influence, such as shared study habits, performance expectations, and competition. Social Peer Pressure (SP) had a moderate-to-low mean ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ), indicating that students were somewhat less influenced by social conformity pressures. Behavioral Peer Pressure (BP) was low-to-moderate ( $M = 2.98$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ), showing that risky or behaviorally coercive influences were less commonly reported. Positive Peer Pressure (PP) exhibited a moderate-to-high mean ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ), reflecting frequent experiences of encouragement, motivation, and support from peers. Conversely, Negative Peer Pressure (NP) was lower ( $M = 2.88$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ), indicating that students reported less exposure to coercive or risky peer behaviors.

Regarding Self-Esteem (SE), the 10-item scale showed a moderate mean ( $M = 2.91$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ), suggesting that students generally maintain a balanced sense of self-worth and confidence. Overall, these results highlight that peer influence at AAU varies in type and valence, with academic and positive influences being more prominent, while negative or risky pressures are less frequent, and self-esteem remains generally stable.

#### **4.3.2 Results of Inferential Statistics**

In this section Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and multiple regressions analysis was computed. With the help of these statistical tools, conclusions are drawn with regard to the sample and decisions are made with respect to the research questions.

### 4.3.2.1 Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationship between peer pressure and self-esteem. Table 4.4 presents the relationship between the five independent variable and the dependent variable self-esteem. To analyze the correlation a 2-tailed Pearson correlation analysis was used. The correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2tailed). In order to interpret the results of the correlation, Somekh and Lewin (2005) criterion for evaluating the magnitude of a correlation was used as a reference.

**Table 4-4 Norm for Evaluating the Magnitude of a Correlation**

S. N	Correlation coefficient (r)	Strength of relationship
1	$r < 0.33$	Weak relationship
2	$0.34 < r < 0.66$	Moderate relationship
3	$0.67 < r < 0.99$	Strong relationship

*Source: Somekh and Lewin (2005)*

**Table 4-5 Pearson Correlation Table**

Variable	Correlations					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Academic Pressure	–					
Social Pressure	.068	–				
Behavioral Pressure	-.038	.131*	–			
Positive Pressure	.057	0.68	.022	–		
Negative Pressure	0.61	0.23	.070	-.077	–	
Self Esteem	.507**	-.186**	-.237**	.707**	-.352**	–

*Source: own survey, 2025 based on SPSS version 27 software*

The results in Table 4.5 indicate that there is a positive and moderate relationship between academic peer pressure and self-esteem ( $r = 0.507$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, as cited in Table 4.4, the r-value of 0.507 reflects a moderate association between academic pressure and self-esteem. Similarly, positive peer pressure shows a strong and significant relationship with self-esteem, with an r-value of 0.707 ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that students who experience constructive peer influence tend to report higher levels of self-worth.

In contrast, the correlation between negative peer pressure and self-esteem reveals a moderate negative relationship ( $r = -0.352$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that exposure to harmful peer dynamics is associated with lower self-esteem. Behavioral peer pressure also shows a negative and significant relationship ( $r = -0.237$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), while social peer pressure presents a weaker but still significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.186$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

In order to interpret the results of the Pearson correlation in Table 4.3, the criterion by Somekh and Lewin (2005) was used. Based on this classification, academic and positive peer pressures have a positive and moderate-to-strong relationship with self-esteem, while social, behavioral, and negative peer pressures show significant negative associations. These findings provide empirical support for the theoretical assumption that peer pressure can influence self-esteem both positively and negatively, depending on its nature and intensity.

#### **4.3.2.2 One-Way ANOVA Analysis**

In order to distinguish the peer pressure influence on self-esteem across the 3 departments this study used One Way Anova analysis.

**Table 4-6 Anova Descriptives Table**

<b>Department</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Bachelor of Arts in journalism and Communication	49	3.539	0.339
Department of Geography & Environmental Studies	13	3.439	0.381
Bachelor of Law	284	3.558	0.309
Total	346	3.551	0.315

**Table 4-7 Anova Table**

<b>ANOVA</b>					
	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Between Groups	0.183	2	0.091	.0919	.054
Within Groups	34.097	34	0.099		
Total	34.280	34			

*Source: own survey, 2025 based on SPSS version 27 software*

The Anova table comprises these departments:

1. Bachelor of Arts in journalism and Communication
2. Department of Geography & Environmental Studies
3. Bachelor of Law

Table 4.6 and 4.7 show a little fluctuation in self-esteem among the three departments. Highest average self-esteem ( $M = 3.56$ ) reported by students studying bachelor of law was followed by Bachelor of Arts in journalism and Communication ( $M = 3.54$ ), and Department of Geography & Environmental Studies ( $M = 3.44$ ).

## Post Hoc Tests

<i>Multiple Comparisons</i>				
<i>Dependent Variable: Self Esteem</i>				
<i>Bonferroni</i>				
<i>(I) Department</i>	<i>(J) Department</i>	<i>Mean Difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Bachelor of Arts in journalism and Communication</i>	<i>Department of Geography &amp; Environmental Studies</i>	<i>.09927</i>	<i>.10066</i>	<i>.974</i>
	<i>Bachelor of Law</i>	<i>-.01945</i>	<i>.05315</i>	<i>1.000</i>
<i>Department of Geography &amp; Environmental Studies</i>	<i>Bachelor of Arts in journalism and Communication</i>	<i>-.09927</i>	<i>.10066</i>	<i>.974</i>
	<i>Bachelor of Law</i>	<i>-.11872</i>	<i>.08936</i>	<i>.555</i>
<i>Bachelor of Law</i>	<i>Bachelor of Arts in journalism and Communication</i>	<i>.01945</i>	<i>.05315</i>	<i>1.000</i>
	<i>Department of Geography &amp; Environmental Studies</i>	<i>.11872</i>	<i>.08936</i>	<i>.555</i>

Post hoc analysis using the Bonferroni test confirmed that there were no significant pairwise differences in self-esteem between the three departments. For example, the difference between Law and Department of Geography & Environmental Studies students (Mdiff = 0.119, p = 0.555) and between Law and Bachelor of Arts in journalism and Communication students (Mdiff = -0.019, p = 1.000) were not statistically significant.

### 4.3.2.3 T-Test

**Table 4-8 Independent Samples t-test: Background (Urban vs. Rural)**

		<b>Independent Samples Test</b>					
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Self Esteem	Equal variances assumed	.185	.667	-.032	344	.975	-.00123
	Equal variances not assumed			-.031	145.188	.975	-.00123

*Source: own survey, 2025 based on SPSS version 27 software*

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether students' self-esteem differed by background (urban vs. rural). Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was not significant,  $F(1, 344) = 0.185$ ,  $p = 0.667$ , indicating that the assumption of equal variances was met.

The results of the t-test showed no statistically significant difference in self-esteem between urban and rural students,  $t(344) = -0.032$ ,  $p = 0.975$ . The mean difference ( $-0.001$ ) was negligible, suggesting that students' self-esteem levels were virtually identical regardless of background.

These findings indicate that students' self-esteem is not influenced by whether they come from an urban or rural background. This suggests that peer pressure dynamics and self-regard are shaped more by the shared university environment than by students' pre-university background.

#### 4.3.2.4 Regression Analysis

#### 4.3.2.5 Multiple Linear Regressions

To address Specific Objectives 3 and 4, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine how five dimensions of peer pressure academic, social, behavioral, positive, and negative predict self-esteem among undergraduate students.

*Table 4-9 Model Summary of Multiple Regressions*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.963	.927	.925	.086

*Source: own survey, 2025 based on SPSS version 27 software*

Predictors: Negative Pressure, Social Pressure, Academic Pressure, Positive Pressure, Behavioral Pressure.

*Table 4-10 Coefficients Result of Multiple Regressions*

Coefficients					
Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	1.415	0.059		23.952	<.001
Academic Pressure	0.273	0.008	0.497	33.607	<.001
Social Pressure	-0.128	0.008	-0.235	-15.778	<.001
Behavioral Pressure	-0.099	0.008	-0.181	-12.142	<.001
Positive Pressure	0.471	0.010	0.675	45.600	<.001
Negative Pressure	-0.152	0.007	-0.313	-21.138	<.001

*Source: own survey, 2025 based on SPSS version 27 software*

As shown in Table 4.9, the multiple correlation coefficient (R) for the model was 0.963, indicating an extremely strong relationship between the predictors and self-esteem. The R Square value of 0.927 shows that the combined effect of the peer pressure variables explains 92.7% of

the variance in self-esteem, while the Adjusted R Square of 0.925 confirms the model's stability after accounting for the number of predictors.

Table 4.10 presents the standardized Beta coefficients for the predictor variables. Among the domains, academic peer pressure exerted a significant positive effect on self-esteem ( $\beta = 0.497, p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that academically oriented peer influence such as shared study habits, performance expectations, and motivation enhances students' self-regard. In contrast, social peer pressure ( $\beta = -0.235, p < 0.001$ ) and behavioral peer pressure ( $\beta = -0.181, p < 0.001$ ) were negatively associated with self-esteem, indicating that conformity-based or risky peer influences undermine confidence.

When examined by valence, the regression results further showed that positive peer influence ( $\beta = 0.675, p < 0.001$ ) had the strongest overall positive effect on self-esteem, while negative peer influence ( $\beta = -0.313, p < 0.001$ ) had the strongest negative effect. This demonstrates that peer pressure is not inherently harmful or beneficial; rather, its impact depends on both the domain (academic, social, behavioral) and the valence (positive or negative) of the influence.

### **Final Multiple Linear Regression Model**

From Table 4.9, the fitted equation is:

$$\mathbf{SE = 1.415 + 0.273AP - 0.128SP - 0.099BP + 0.471PP}$$

$$SE = \beta_0 + \beta_1(AP) + \beta_2(SP) + \beta_3(BP) + \beta_4(PP) + \beta_5(NG) + \epsilon$$

**Where:**

- ✓ SE = Predicted self-esteem
- ✓ AP = Academic pressure
- ✓ SP = Social pressure
- ✓ BP = Behavioral pressure
- ✓ PP = Positive peer pressure
- ✓ NG = Negative peer pressure
- ✓  $\beta_0$  = Intercept
- ✓  $\beta_1$ – $\beta_5$  = Regression coefficients
- ✓  $\varepsilon$  = Error term

Academic pressure (AP) and positive peer pressure (PP) have positive coefficients, indicating that higher academic support and encouragement from peers are associated with higher self-esteem.

Social pressure (SP), behavioral pressure (BP), and negative peer pressure (NG) have negative coefficients, suggesting that these types of pressure tend to decrease self-esteem.

This model highlights that peer pressure is multidimensional: some aspects, like encouragement and academic motivation, enhance self-esteem, while other aspects, such as coercion or risky behaviors, undermine it. The regression provides a quantitative estimate of the strength and direction of these influences.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter presents the findings of the study according to the research objectives, beginning with descriptive statistics to illustrate patterns of peer pressure and self-esteem, followed by inferential statistics examining the relationships and predictive effects of academic, social, and behavioral peer pressures on self-esteem among undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University, Sidist Kilo Campus..

### 5.1 Descriptive Statistics of Peer Pressure and Self-Esteem

The descriptive analysis revealed that academic pressure was the most frequently experienced form of peer pressure ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 0.57$ ), followed by behavioral pressure ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ) and social pressure ( $M = 2.54$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ). This suggests that peers primarily influence each other in academic contexts, including study habits, performance expectations, and competition. These results align with Tadesse and Melaku (2019), who highlighted that academic peer influence is a significant factor shaping motivation and self-regard among Ethiopian university students.

Analysis of the valence of peer pressure showed a relatively high mean for positive peer pressure ( $M = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ), indicating that students frequently experienced supportive, encouraging, and goal-oriented interactions with peers. In contrast, negative peer pressure had a lower mean ( $M = 1.98$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ), suggesting that coercive, risky, or exclusionary peer behaviors were less common, although some students encountered them more frequently than others. This pattern underscores that peer pressure is not intrinsically harmful or beneficial but depends on the quality and intention of the influence (Kwan et al., 2019; Misbah et al., 2021; Parker & Gamm, 2020).

## **5.2 Inferential Statistics Relationship between Overall Peer Pressure and Self-Esteem**

A simple linear regression revealed a significant negative relationship between overall peer pressure and self-esteem ( $\beta = -0.360$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that increased peer pressure is associated with lower self-esteem. The model explained approximately 18% of the variance in self-esteem, reflecting a moderate effect. These findings are consistent with Uslu (2021) and Kasim et al. (2025), who reported that excessive peer influence can reduce students' self-worth. This also aligns with Rosenberg's (1965) assertion that social influences significantly shape self-perception, particularly in transitional environments like university.

## **5.3 Predictive Effects of Academic, Social, and Behavioral Pressures**

Multiple linear regression analysis demonstrated that academic pressure positively predicted self-esteem ( $\beta = 0.497$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that peers' encouragement, shared study habits, and performance motivation enhance students' self-regard. Conversely, social pressure negatively predicted self-esteem ( $\beta = -0.235$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that peer expectations in social contexts, such as conformity or comparison, may undermine confidence. Behavioral pressure also negatively affected self-esteem ( $\beta = -0.181$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), reflecting that engagement in risky or unhealthy behaviors due to peer influence diminishes self-worth. These results emphasize the dual nature of peer pressure, being beneficial in academic settings but potentially harmful in social and behavioral domains (Berndt, 1999; Santor et al., 2000).

## 5.4 Positive and Negative Peer Influence

Further analysis of valence revealed that positive peer pressure had the strongest positive effect on self-esteem ( $\beta = 0.675$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), demonstrating the importance of supportive, encouraging, and goal-oriented peer interactions. Negative peer pressure exhibited the strongest negative effect ( $\beta = -0.313$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that coercive or risky peer behaviors significantly reduce students' self-esteem. These findings are in line with Giletta and Laninga-Wijnen (2021) and Prinstein and Dodge (2008), who highlighted the protective role of positive peer relationships and the risks associated with negative peer conformity.

## Chapter Six: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

### 6.1 Summary of Findings

This study investigated the influence of peer pressure on self-esteem among undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University using a quantitative, cross-sectional design. Analysis of data from 346 respondents revealed that overall peer pressure had a statistically significant negative relationship with self-esteem ( $\beta = -0.424$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

When examined by domain, academic peer pressure showed a positive effect on self-esteem ( $\beta = 0.497$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that academically oriented peer influence such as shared study habits, performance expectations, and motivation can enhance students' self-regard. In contrast, social peer pressure ( $\beta = -0.235$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and behavioral peer pressure ( $\beta = -0.181$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) were negatively associated with self-esteem, indicating that conformity-based or risky peer influences undermine students' confidence.

Across all domains, the valence of peer influence was also important. Approximately 65% of students reported experiencing positive peer pressure (e.g., encouragement, responsibility, motivation), while 35% reported negative peer pressure (e.g., rejection, coercion, risky behaviors). Academic pressure was identified as the most common form of peer influence (43% of respondents), with 61% describing it as motivating and 30% as stressful. Furthermore, 52% of students reported that peer acceptance improved their self-esteem, while 39% indicated that rejection lowered it.

## 6.2 Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the influence of peer pressure on self-esteem among undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University, Sidist Kilo Campus. First, peer pressure emerges as a significant factor affecting students' self-esteem, demonstrating that the ways in which peers interact and influence one another can substantially shape self-perception, motivation, and overall psychological well-being. The results indicate that different forms of peer pressure have distinct effects, highlighting the multidimensional nature of peer influence.

Second, academic and positive peer pressure were found to have beneficial effects on students' self-esteem. When peers encourage study habits, set shared performance expectations, or offer emotional and motivational support, students are more likely to feel confident, competent, and motivated to achieve their goals. This underscores the importance of fostering constructive peer environments where collaboration, goal-setting, and mutual encouragement are prioritized.

In contrast, social and behavioral peer pressures, as well as negative peer influence, were shown to have detrimental effects on self-esteem. Peer expectations to conform to social norms, risky behaviors, or exclusionary practices were associated with lower self-worth, heightened stress, and feelings of inadequacy. These findings illustrate that not all peer interactions are supportive and that harmful peer dynamics can compromise students' mental health and academic engagement.

Finally, the study emphasizes the role of peer acceptance and belonging in promoting psychological well-being. Students who feel included, respected, and valued within their peer

groups experience higher self-esteem, whereas those who encounter rejection, coercion, or exclusion report diminished self-image. Overall, these conclusions highlight the need for interventions that promote positive peer interactions, mitigate negative peer influences, and enhance supportive academic and social networks to foster the well-being of university students.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following are the recommendations forwarded for Addis Ababa University.

First, the university should strengthen academic peer mentoring programs. Given that academic peer pressure was shown to positively influence self-esteem, institutionalizing structured peer mentoring groups can provide juniors with guidance from seniors on effective study habits, exam preparation, goal setting, and academic motivation. Such programs would foster supportive academic environments that enhance students' confidence and engagement.

Second, attention must be given to mitigating the effects of negative and social peer pressures, which were found to lower students' self-esteem. Expanding student counseling services and organizing workshops or awareness sessions can provide safe spaces for students to discuss challenges related to peer rejection, social conformity, or engagement in risky behaviors. These interventions can equip students with strategies to resist harmful peer influence, strengthen resilience, and maintain positive self-perception.

Third, the university should encourage the formation of healthy peer networks through student-led organizations and clubs. The study revealed that positive peer influence significantly enhances self-esteem; therefore, promoting clubs focused on academic success, personal development, social support, and teamwork can create environments where students feel

encouraged, motivated, and valued. Participation in such groups can reinforce constructive behaviors, peer encouragement, and a sense of belonging.

Finally, university administrators and educators should incorporate awareness of peer pressure dynamics into student orientation programs and ongoing support initiatives. By highlighting both the beneficial and harmful aspects of peer influence, students can develop critical awareness and self-regulation skills, thereby protecting their mental health and fostering overall well-being. These recommendations aim to create a balanced and supportive campus culture where peer influence contributes positively to students' personal and academic growth.

### **6.3.1 Suggestions for Further Study**

Although this study explored the influence of peer pressure on self-esteem among undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University, Sidist Kilo Campus, there remain several areas that future research could address. Future studies could include students from multiple universities or campuses across Ethiopia to examine whether the findings are consistent across different academic and cultural contexts.

Expanding the sample to include postgraduate students or students from other higher education institutions may provide a broader understanding of how peer pressure affects self-esteem across educational levels.

Longitudinal research designs could be employed to investigate how peer pressure impacts self-esteem over time, allowing researchers to capture changes and trends throughout the university experience.

Additionally, future studies could consider other factors that may influence the relationship between peer pressure and self-esteem, such as social media use, gender, urban-rural background, or socio-economic status.

Finally, examining the effectiveness of interventions such as peer mentoring programs, counseling services, and student support initiatives could provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing positive peer interactions and mitigating the negative effects of peer influence on self-esteem. Addressing these areas could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of peer dynamics and support the development of strategies to promote students' psychological well-being

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## **Appendices**

### **APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Addis Ababa University**

**College of Education and Language Studies**

**School of Psychology**

Questionnaire to Assess the Influence of Peer Pressure on Self Esteem among Undergraduate Students at Addis Ababa University.

I am a graduate student at the School of Psychology, Addis Ababa University. Currently, I am conducting a study on the influence of peer pressure on self-Esteem among undergraduate students at Addis Ababa University.

You are invited to participate in this study as an undergraduate student and fill out this questionnaire. These results from this study are expected to inform policies aimed at helping young university students better understand and navigate through the different forms of peer pressure, enabling them to build their self-confidence and make informed decisions. I genuinely appreciate you taking the time to help me. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw from it at any time. Your name and any identifying information are not required. All information collected will be used solely for academic purposes and will be treated confidentially. Your honest and unbiased responses will significantly contribute to the success of this research.

**Part 1: - Demographic Profile of Respondents**

**Direction:** Please select the appropriate response category by ticking with **X** or  $\sqrt$  mark.

**1. Gender**

1. Male                       2. Female

**2. Year of Study**

1. 2<sup>nd</sup> Year                       2. 3<sup>rd</sup> Year                       3. 4<sup>th</sup> Year

**3. Department**

- 1) Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Communication (Multimedia)   
2) Department of Geography & Environmental Studies                       3) School of law

**4. Family Income Level**

1. Low                       2. Medium                       3. High

**5. Family Educational Level**

1. Unable to read and write                       2. Able to read and write   
3. Elementary - Junior School Completed                       4. Secondary School Completed   
5. Above Secondary

**6. Residential Background**

1. Urban                       2. Rural

## Part 2: - Peer Pressure Scale Questionnaire (PPSQ)

**Direction: Please indicate your degree of agreement/disagreement with the following Statements by marking right to the appropriate number.**

(1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - Neutral; 4 - Agree; and 5 - Strongly agree).

Code	Items	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Academic Peer Pressure (AP)</b>						
AP1	I feel pressured to perform well academically because my peers expect it.					
AP2	I study more when I see my classmates working hard.					
AP3	I prioritize certain elective courses or academic activities because my peers value them.					
AP4	I feel anxious when my academic performance is lower than my peers.					
AP5	I participate in group study sessions mainly to avoid being left out.					
<b>Social Peer Pressure (SP)</b>						
SP1	I attend social events (birthdays, music concerts, sport events and other social events) mainly because my friends do.					
SP2	I feel the need to dress or act like my peers to be accepted.					
SP3	I follow social trends to avoid feeling excluded.					
SP4	I feel uncomfortable when I don't participate in group activities.					
SP5	I change my opinions or preferences to match those of my social circle.					
<b>Behavioral Peer Pressure (BP)</b>						
BP1	I have tried new habits or behaviors because my peers encouraged me.					
BP2	I sometimes act against my personal values to fit in with my peer group.					
BP3	I feel compelled to behave in ways that match my friends' expectations.					
BP4	I have changed my lifestyle due to peer influence.					
BP5	I imitate the Behavior of peers even when I'm unsure about it.					
<b>Positive Peer Pressure (PP)</b>						

<b>PP1</b>	My peers motivate me to set academic goals.					
<b>PP2</b>	I engage in healthy habits because of peer encouragement.					
<b>PP3</b>	I feel supported by my peers to make good decisions.					
<b>PP4</b>	Peer influence has helped me improve my time management.					
<b>PP5</b>	I am inspired by my peers to work hard and stay focused.					
<b>Negative Peer Pressure (NP)</b>						
<b>NP1</b>	I have felt pressured to engage in risky behaviors (e.g., drink alcohol, smoking, chewing khat and other substance use).					
<b>NP2</b>	I sometimes compromise my values to avoid rejection.					
<b>NP3</b>	I feel isolated when I refuse to follow peer norms.					
<b>NP4</b>	Peer pressure has led me to make decisions I later regretted.					
<b>NP5</b>	I have felt pressured to hide my true opinions to fit in with my peers					

### Part 3: Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale

**Direction:** Below are 10 statements related to your self-esteem, based on Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale. After reading each statement, please indicate whether you agree or disagree. Use a scale of 1 to 4 to indicate the strength of your agreement:

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Agree
4. Strongly Agree

Please take your time to reflect on each statement and answer honestly. Your responses are important, and I appreciate your participation.

<b>No</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>SE1</b>	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.				
<b>SE2</b>	At times I think I am no good at all.				
<b>SE3</b>	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.				
<b>SE4</b>	I am able to do things as well as most other people.				

<b>SE5</b>	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.				
<b>SE6</b>	I certainly feel useless at times.				
<b>SE7</b>	I feel that I'm a person of worth.				
<b>SE8</b>	I wish I could have more respect for myself.				
<b>SE9</b>	All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.				
<b>SE10</b>	I take a positive attitude toward myself.				