

SELF-ESTEEM AS A PREDICTOR OF PSYCHO SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract: The study investigated Self-esteem as a predictor of Psychosocial Adjustment among in-school adolescents in Anambra State. The purpose of the study was to find out if self-esteem predicts in-school adolescents' psychosocial adjustments. One research questions and One null hypothesis guided the study. Correlational Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 19,478 senior secondary two (SS11) students in 268 secondary schools in the six education zones in Anambra State for the 2021/2022 academic session. The sample size of the study comprises 3,000 SS11 students sampled from the 19,478 SSII students in the 268 secondary schools in Anambra State. The sample was obtained using multi-stage sampling procedure. Two questionnaires titled "Self-esteem questionnaire (SEQ) and Psychosocial adjustment questionnaire (PSOAQ) were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by three experts; two from the Department of Educational Foundations and the other in the Department of Guidance and Counseling, all from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instruments was established using Crombach's alpha method and the alpha coefficients got were 0.88 and 0.78 respectively for SEQ, and PSOAQ. Data collected were analyzed using Linear-regression analysis. The findings showed that self-esteem significantly predicts in-school adolescents' psychosocial adjustment. It was recommended among others; that in-school adolescents should be given strong encouragement to avoid inflated self-esteem, unstable low self-esteem and unstable high self-esteem which may deteriorate their psychosocial adjustment.

Keywords: Self-esteem, Psychosocial adjustment, In-school Adolescent.

1. INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem refers to individual's perception or subjective appraisal of his own self-worth, feeling of self-respect and self-confidence, and the extent to which he holds positives or negative view about himself. Self-esteem manifest when a person is competent, effective, loved, admired and respected by others. It can be seen an overall assessment of the individual's worthiness, expressed in a positive or negative orientation towards him. It is a component of the Self-concept. Besides self-

esteem, self-efficacy and self-identification are an important part of the Self-concept. The synonyms of the term self-esteem are: self-importance, self-respect, self-love and self-completeness which may contain elements of pride. According to Rosenberg (1965) self-esteem is consist of the totality of individual thoughts and feelings, having reference to him as an object. Self-esteem, however, differs from self-confidence and self-efficacy which include conviction in terms of personal qualities and future performance. A genuine self-esteem is based on accurate appraisal of one's struggle and weaknesses however, unrealistic self-esteem has little value. This means that both unrealistic and genuine self-esteem have impact on psychosocial adjustments which depending on the type manifest on the student either positively or negatively.

According to Branden (1969) self-esteem involves the disposition to experience oneself as being competent to cope with basic challenges of life and as being worthy of happiness. This two-factor approach, as some call it, offers a definition limiting self-esteem within the limits of competence and worth alone. To Branden, self-esteem is described as follows; (1) self-esteem is a fundamental human need; it is part of the process of life and is indispensable to normal and healthy self-development and is vital for survival. (2) self-esteem is an automatic and inevitable consequence of the individual's choices. (3) self-esteem is a part of, or a background to individual's thoughts, feelings and actions. Therefore, the way an individual thinks and feels about himself, how well he does things that are important to himself reflect the individual's level of self-esteem. However, Benjac, Hall, Petride and Mavroveli, (2016), assert that self-esteem is a person's overall sense of his value or worth. Adler and Stewart, (2004) added that self-esteem can be considered as a sort of measure of how much a person values, approves of, appreciates, prizes or likes himself. Thus, Self-esteem can be experienced by children at different stages of development.

The development of self-esteem in in-school adolescent is heavily influenced by parent and child relationship and the school environment. A cordial parent and child relationship is expected to lead to factors such as encouragements, words for accomplishment and success. But when the relationship is not cordial failure could be among the factors in the development of self-esteem among in-school adolescents which eventually may disapprove the psychosocial adjustment of the students. On the same note, the school environment influences the in-school adolescents' self-esteem through the attitude fostered towards competition and diversity, and their interest in academic, sports and arts (Renk, Eddy, Dishon and Reid, 2012). Other factors that could contribute to self-esteem are genetics, personalities, life experiences, thoughts, age, health, comparing self to others, social circumstances and reactions to others (Rosenberg, 1995).

Further, Emler, (2001) opined that self-esteem is a part of one's personality and every individual need to have a sense of personal worth coming from life challenges which may contribute to his success. Notably, Smith and Mackie (2004), described self-esteem as what an individual thinks about himself which could be either positive or negative evaluations about the self. Equally, Hakelind and Sutton, (2007) assert that self-esteem reflects an associative network containing all of the associations between the concept of self and self-describing attributes. This assertion collides with Zigzag Suran and Liping, (2001), who posited that self-esteem is the value an individual places on his worth. According to Tracy and Robin, (2003), self-esteem is described as an affective or emotional component that consists of positive and negative self-evaluation. It is also conceptualized as an evaluative dimension of the self that includes feelings or worthiness, prides and discouragement.

Consequently, Rosenberg in Abtinash, (2011), described self-esteem as a favourable or unfavourable attitude towards the self. This assertion is in line with the view of Blascovich and Tomalka, (2011) who described self-esteem as the perception of self-worth or the extent to which an individual values, prizes, or appreciates himself. On the other hand, Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez and Fryberg, (2015) ascertain that self-esteem has two elements which include self-knowledge and self-awareness. According to Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez and Fryberg, (2015) self-esteem includes the individual's perceptions about their own strengths and weaknesses, abilities, attitudes and values. Its development starts at birth and is constantly developing under the influence of experience.

Further, self-esteem according to Mcleod, (2008) is all about the awareness of who you are. It is a part of or a background to individual's thoughts, feelings and actions (Mcleod, 2008). During different periods of human age, the in-school adolescents realize one or other side of their own self. The adolescent becomes aware of their skills and practical abilities first – motor skills, artistic abilities, performing skills. They start becoming aware of their personal traits at a significantly later stage in life. The process starts when all moral and social benchmarks for assessment have been acquired. That can be explained with the complexity and ambiguity of results from the manifestation of personal qualities. The in-school

adolescents become aware of their personal peculiarities and traits in the communication process with adults and peers. This process of self-awareness is the most active in adolescence (Covarrubias and Fryberg, 2015). Mcleod, (2008) description on self-esteem however collaborate Dunham, Baron and Banaji (2007) who opined that Self-esteem is a fundamental component of self-awareness and occupies a key place in the structure of adolescent individual because it is related to mental health and definition of life goals.

Self-esteem is also a part of self-concept and not the same as a self-concept. Self-concept is the perception an individual has about himself; the answer when he ask himself the question, who am I? Self-concept means knowing about one's own tendencies, thoughts, preferences, habits, skills and areas of weakness. Additionally, Mcleod explained that self-esteem is similar to self-image yet they are different from each other. Self-image means the way an individual sees himself instead of being based on reality. However, it can base on false and inaccurate thoughts about oneself. An individual's self-image may be close to reality or far from it but it is generally not complete in line with objective of reality or with the way others perceived it. Burton, (2015) also explained that self-esteem is different from self-confidence. Burton described self-confidence as ones' trust in himself and his ability to deal with challenges, solve problems and engaged successfully with the world. Burton opined that self-confidence is based more on external measures of success and values than the internal measures that contributes to self-esteem. Thus, an individual can have high self-confidence, particularly in a certain area or field but still lack a healthy sense of overall self-esteem. As Rosenbeg, (1965) rightly put, self-esteem is a favourable, or unfavourable attitude towards the self. It is simply ones' attitude towards oneself.

Self-esteem is not fixed rather it is malleable and measurable, meaning that self-esteem can be tested for and improve upon. Self-esteem can be influenced by different factors such as genetics, personalities, life experiences, age, health, thought, social circumstances, the reactions of others and comparing the self to others. According to Hibbert, (2013), self-esteem involves what an individual thinks, feels and believes about himself and it is different from self-worth which is the more global recognition that one is a valuable human being worthy of love.

For the fact that self-esteem has been described as the judgments individuals' make about their worth and the feelings associated with those judgments, it has been ranked as among the most important aspects of self-development since evaluation of individuals' competencies affect emotional experiences, future behaviours and psychological adjustment (Fertman and Chub, 1992). Self-esteem is influenced by culture, childrearing practices, relationship / interaction with parents and teachers. Robins, (2011) revealed that an individual could have two kinds of self-esteem; High self-esteem and Low self-esteem. According to Robin, individuals with high self-esteem have been reported to firmly believe in certain values and principles and also are ready to defend themselves even when finding oppositions.

Highly self-esteemed individuals feel secured enough to modify their beliefs in the light of experiences. A person with high self-esteem is confident, proud and self-respecting. Further, high self-esteem can be implicit or explicit. Implicit self-esteem refers to individuals' disposition to evaluate himself positively or negatively in a spontaneous or unconscious manner whereas, explicit self-esteem refers to a more conscious and flexible self-evaluation. Despite high self-esteem, Robins, (2011) asserted that there is another self-esteem known as Low self-esteem. Robins reported that adolescents with low self-esteem tend to be critical of themselves depend on approval and praise of others when evaluating their self-worth. They equally tend to feel insecure, lack confidence, usually anxious, unhappy and self-critical.

In addition, Heatherton, (2001) asserted that Processes related to the formation and development of self-esteem determine the perimeters of the relationship between the adolescent and the surrounding world which contribute to the development of their competence and the quality of the activities performed. However, these processes should not be random, they should be smooth so that the adolescent can build and adequate self-esteem. Thus the more realistic the process is, the more adaptable the adolescent will be.

Further, there are three major types of self-esteem and they are; inflated self-esteem, high self-esteem and low self-esteem (Gloria, 2015). According to Paul (2013), in-school adolescents who have inflated self-esteem tend to think of themselves as better than other people and are always ready to underestimate others. They always want to be ahead and most times do not mind hurting others to achieve the success they desired, thinking that will bring them happiness. These adolescents do not have the ability to listen to others rather they constantly blame others and always ready to brag to hide their incompetence and at the same time they always have great fear of rejection and failure, otherwise feel the need to camouflage himself (Paul, 2013).

Those who have high self-esteem could have an easier time handling conflict, resisting negative pressures and making friends. They always have positive and pleasant feelings with others and enjoy social interaction with their peers. They laugh and smile more and have a general optimistic view of the world and their life. Likewise, those with low self-esteem may have difficulties in dealing with problems, may be overly critical and may become passive, withdrawn and depressed. They may hesitate to try new things, may speak negatively about themselves, may easily be frustrated and could often see temporary problems as permanent conditions. These adolescent students may be pessimistic about themselves. At the same time, those who fail to develop high self-esteem and competence may eventually find it more difficult to adapt and may likewise continue to be more vulnerable to negative psychosocial adjustment.

Recent studies, for example, Virgil and Marion, (2012) revealed that unstable self-esteem moderates the association between self-esteem level and psychosocial adjustment. According to Virgil and Marion, (2012) individuals with unstable low self-esteem are likened to experience dejection whereas those with unstable high self-esteem are likened to experience agitation therefore it is advisable that in-school adolescents should be encouraged to develop a stable self-esteem to enable him to positively adapt psychosocially in his environment.

Therefore, Orawan, Peninnah, Linda and Virat (2018) who assessed psychosocial problems and self-esteem in adolescents revealed that adolescents in tertiary institutions were at higher risk of developing low levels of self-esteem and greater psychosocial problems. According to this study by Orawan, Peninnah, Linda and Virat (2018) there is a significant differences in the peer problems subscale and pro-social behaviour of these adolescents. This result made them to conclude that enhancing students' self-esteem may help with psychosocial adjustment in the schools and in the society at large. Again, Nwankwo and Oparaugo (2023), in a study revealed that secondary school adolescents' self-esteem correlate significantly to their psychosocial adjustment and opined that psychologist in the schools should organize programs in schools that will help to provide the students adequate orientation towards the development of high self-esteem which would likely contribute significantly to their psychosocial adjustment. However, following the assertions of the above researchers, one may say that self-esteem and psychosocial adjustment goes hand in hand. When a student develop a high self-esteem he will likely come up with good life style which could affects his psychosocial adjustment positively whereas when his self-esteem is low it could as well affect his psychosocial adjustment but negatively.

The psychosocial adjustment of an in-school adolescent in other words, has become a crucial determinant of their competence and confidence by which these students faced major transition from childhood to adulthood. It was based on this assertion that the researchers come up with the opinion that self-esteem is central to what every individual does with their lives; the loyalty the have to develop and caring for others and it is at the heart of everything that the adolescents opt to achieve in their lives. Self-esteem will influence the adolescent's performance at school; it will determine how competent the student will be, to what extent that student will be accepted by others and what acceptance they will demonstrate in turn which would eventually relate to their psychosocial adjustment outcome.

Thus, psychosocial adjustment has been defined by different scholars in different ways. The psychologists however, define psychosocial adjustment as the relative degree of harmony between an individual's needs and the requirements of the environment. According to Anderson, Keith and Novale, (2002) it is referred to the psychosocial accommodation of a person on a life altering event or transition. Likewise Gate and Jeisild in Mangal, (2008) described psychosocial adjustment as a continual process in which the students vary their behaviour to provide a more harmonious relationship with the school environment. Also to Agbakwuru and Agbakwuru, (2012) it is a process of bringing individuals behaviour in conformity with the norms of the school setting. According to Agbakwuru and Agbakwuru, in-school adolescents' psychosocial adjustment can as well be described as comprising academic, social and emotional adjustment which can be taken to mean the process adopted by students in maintaining a balance between their academics, social needs, emotional needs and the needs in the school environment.

Having mentioned various ways self-esteem could affect psychosocial adjustment of the in-school adolescent students, the researchers viewed the apparent situation in which, many in-school adolescents may have been poorly psychosocially adjusted due to their level of self-esteem which plays substantial role in shaping the in-school adolescents' psychosocial adjustment. Consequently, it is notable that the ways in-school adolescents psychosocially adjusted in the early adolescence stage can be dangerous in the quality of life the lived. Such adjustment may lead in-school adolescent to life of violence, bullying, cultism, misuse of drugs and alcohol both in and outside school environment and may eventually affect their

reputations. Again, the ways these in-school adolescents psychosocially adjusted likewise may have negative effect on the family and the entire nation in the long run.

Upon all these observations, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, it appears only little attention has been paid on the impact of self-esteem on psychosocial adjustment of the in-school adolescents in Nigeria. Hence, there is a need to determine the predictive power of self-esteem on psychosocial adjustment among in-school adolescents specifically in Anambra State. Therefore, this forms the purpose of this study which is to find out if self-esteem predicts psychosocial adjustment of in-school adolescents.

One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. The research question is; to what extent does self-esteem predicts in-school psychosocial adjustment? And the null hypothesis is; Self-esteem is not a significant predictor of in-school adolescent psychosocial adjustment.

2. METHODS

The correlation research design was adopted in carrying out the study. The type of research design seeks to establish the pattern of relationship that exists between two or more variables (Nworgu, 2015). The researcher adopted the design because the study was interested in establishing the predictive power of self-esteem on in-school adolescents psychosocial adjustment. The population of the study comprises 19,478 Senior Secondary Two (SS2) Students in Anambra State. 3000 SS2 Students were sampled for the study. Multi stage random procedure was used in sampling the participants for the study. In the first stage three education zones were sample out of five education zones employing balloting. The researcher stratified 15 secondary schools among the 132 secondary schools in the three education zones. The 15 schools were stratified on the basis of the school type which gives 18 male schools, 22 female schools and 92 coeducational schools. From the male schools four schools were sampled, from the female schools four schools and from coeducational schools seven schools were sampled and all were sampled through simple random sampling techniques. From the four male schools, there were 672 students and they were all used for the study; from the female schools, there were 811 and they were all used while from the coeducational schools, a total of 1,517 students were sampled (792males; 725 females). Two instruments titled “Self-esteem questionnaire and Psychosocial adjustment questionnaire were used for data collection. The questionnaires has “Psychosocial adjustment 28 items and for Self-esteem 20 items structured in four rating scale; Never (N) Rarely (R), Sometimes (S) and Always for psychosocial adjustment and Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree and Disagree for self-esteem which are rated 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The questionnaires were developed by the researcher and were validated by three experts, one in department of Guidance and Counseling, two in the department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. The questionnaire have tested reliability index at 0.78 (PSOA) and 0.88 (SE) respectively.

Data were analyzed using Linear Regression Analyses for both research questions and the hypotheses in one table. The decision rule for the null hypothesis was that p-value higher than 0.05 was not rejected whereas the hypothesis with p-value lower than 0.05 was rejected.

3. RESULTS

The result was presented on a table as follow

Research Question 1

To what extent does self-esteem predict in-school adolescents’ psychosocial adjustment in Anambra State?

Null Hypothesis

Self-esteem is not a significant predictor of in-school adolescents’ psychosocial adjustment in Anambra State.

Table 1: Regression analysis on self-esteem as a predictor of in-school adolescents’ psychosocial adjustment in Anambra State

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Beta	df	t	P<0.05
0.466	0.217	0.217	0.466	2982	28.782	0.000

The table shows that the overall model is significantly useful in explaining in-school adolescents psychosocial adjustment $F(1,2983) = 828.391, p < .05$. This shows that the regression analysis model is good for the study. The correlation coefficient is 466 whereas the R^2 (coefficient determination) is .217. This shows that the model explains 21.7% of the variance in the in-school adolescents' psychosocial adjustment. Therefore, self-esteem predicts 21.7% of the variance in the in-school adolescents' psychosocial adjustment.

The test of hypothesis shows that self-esteem significantly predicts in-school adolescents psychosocial adjustment with the $t(2983) = 28.78, P < .05$.

The table shows that the p -value for test of the null hypothesis is less than .05 therefore, the H_0 is rejected, $t(2983) = 28.78, p < .05$. This shows that self-esteem significant predicts in-school adolescents' psychosocial adjustment in Anambra State.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings show that self-esteem contributed 21.7 percent of in-school adolescents' psychosocial adjustment. Based on the findings, the study indicated that self-esteem is not fixed rather it is malleable and measurable meaning that self-esteem can be tested for and improve upon. This is in corroboration with the assertion of Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez and Fryberg (2015) that stated that self-esteem development starts at birth and is constantly developing under the influence of experience. This is especially true because during different periods of human age, the in-school adolescents realize one or other side of themselves. They start becoming aware of their personal peculiarities and traits in the communication process with adults and peers.

The findings of the present study also revealed that self-esteem significantly predicts in-school adolescents' psychological adjustment. The study also succinctly agreed with the observations of Nwankwo and Ursula, (2023) that revealed that secondary school adolescents' self-esteem significantly predict their psychosocial adjustment. Virgil and Marion, (2012) on their part contend that unstable self-esteem moderates the association between self-esteem and psychosocial adjustment. It revealed that individuals with unstable low self-esteem are likened to experience deception whereas those with unstable high self-esteem are likened to experience agitation. Therefore, the present study showed that self-esteem of an individual significantly predicts his psychosocial adjustment.

5. CONCLUSION

It was concluded that self-esteem affect every aspect of ones' life. When in-school adolescents develop a high self-esteem, the have good reputations and adequately fit in to the school activities and improve their adjustment. Therefore the study provided information for the educators regarding self-esteem and its relationship with in-school adolescents (male and female) psychosocial adjustment.

The researcher however made the following recommendations: first, Secondary school principals together with the classroom teachers should effortless create enabling environment that would enhance psychosocial adjustment of their adolescent students. Secondly, Seminars, workshops and awareness should be created and organized by the school principals for the in-school adolescents against their psychosocial adjustment. Fourthly, in-school adolescents should be given strong encouragement to avoid inflated self-esteem, unstable low self-esteem and unstable high self-esteem which may deteriorate their psychosocial adjustment. Lastly, In-school adolescents should control their thinking abilities by focusing their minds and thoughts on worthwhile issues and events of life.

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