

## Self-esteem among school-going adolescents

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### Abstract

The current study aims to understand self-esteem in schooled adolescents. To achieve this, a self-esteem scale was applied to second-year high school students at "Yahya Sharif" High School in the Wilaya of Mostaganem. The study sample consisted of 80 students (55 females, 25 males). The results indicated that there were no differences in the level of self-esteem attributable to the variables of (gender or specialization).

**Keywords:** Educated adolescents, Self-esteem, Secondary School, Mostaganem Province.

### Problem Statement

Adolescence is one of the most important stages of development, characterized by various psychological, social, cognitive, and emotional changes. These changes can affect the individual either positively or negatively, generating conflicting emotions that make it difficult for adolescents to understand their capabilities and social roles. During this period, adolescents gradually transition from dependence to independence.

Adolescents have several needs, including the need to understand and appreciate themselves. Self-esteem is a crucial element in an individual's life stages, encompassing the need for appreciation, self-reliance, and a desire for leadership. These needs drive adolescents to improve themselves and achieve social value and status. Smith's study indicates that children with high self-esteem tend to excel academically and socially and have confidence in their

abilities, while children with low self-esteem are found to be more prone to depression and anxiety and lack confidence in their abilities (Fouad, 1998, p. 122).

Since adolescence coincides with high school education, which is one of the most critical stages of education, it is essential to address the needs of this period. This can be achieved by explaining the changes adolescents undergo and providing them with information that helps them develop a social personality in school and throughout their lives (Olivier, 2007, p. 129).

Stickle (2007) pointed out that self-esteem among adolescents reaches its lowest point in early adolescence compared to other life stages. During this period, the dimensions of self differ significantly from those in childhood. An individual's true image is formed through their self-perception, whether positive or negative. Negative self-esteem can hinder the ability to undertake and succeed in any activity.

An adolescent with negative self-esteem is unable to take initiatives or achieve specific goals because they lack confidence in themselves and their abilities, leading to feelings of weakness and failure.

Based on this, we pose the following questions:

1. Are there statistically significant differences between the average self-esteem scores of male and female second-year high school students?
2. Are there differences in the level of self-esteem among second-year high school students attributable to the specialization variable?

### **Hypotheses**

To answer these questions, we propose the following sub-hypotheses:

1. There are statistically significant differences between the average self-esteem scores of male and female second-year high school students.
2. There are differences in the level of self-esteem among second-year high school students attributable to the specialization variable.

### **Importance of the Topic**

The study's topic is significant for schooled adolescents as it addresses an essential stage of individual development, adolescence, which involves many physical, cognitive, social, and emotional changes. This study aims to highlight one of the critical components of personality that guides behavior: self-esteem. We seek to demonstrate its importance for the individual, their family, and educators.

### **Operational Definitions**

- **Self-Esteem:** Affective process through which an individual evaluates their self-image, including beliefs, values, feelings, thoughts, and attitudes. It encompasses the acceptance or rejection of oneself, the sense of importance and worthiness, and feelings of competence in social situations. In this study, it refers to the score a student obtains on the self-esteem scale.

## Theoretical Framework

**Self-Concept:** Many researchers in various fields, including psychology, have focused on the concept of self due to its importance in shaping an individual's personality. Among the definitions of this concept are :

- It is the awareness and consciousness of an individual's existence, gradually developing and differentiating into the perceptual field. The self-structure results from the individual's interaction with the environment, playing a role in satisfying and organizing motivations hierarchically, and helping form and achieve moral standards (Salah El-Din, 2005, p. 11).
- It is a set of reflective processes inferred through observable and apparent behavior, serving as an evaluation of oneself as a whole in terms of appearance, background, origins, abilities, and attitudes, aiming to achieve self-actualization (Ben Youssef, 2014, p. 30).

The self-concept is the complete image an individual forms about themselves, as a person with their own identity, and it involves evaluating personal characteristics and attitudes.

### 2.3.1. Factors Influencing Self-Concept

There are several factors that can influence the self-concept, including:

- **Environmental Stimuli:** An individual's self is a complementary part of their environment and the surrounding world. This means that a person must see themselves within the overall situation, correctly appreciating their self-worth. When one has a true image of oneself, free from the influence of others' attitudes, they can accurately assess their abilities without clashing with social pressures or fearing social rejection (Salah El-Din, 2005, p. 11).
- **Physical Characteristics and Social Standards:** These play a significant role in an individual's self-image. The body image is affected by objective characteristics such as size, speed of movement, and muscular coordination. Social characteristics rely on social standards, such as how others perceive the individual and the constant evaluation between good and bad.
- **Mental Ability:** Mental ability plays an essential role in influencing an individual's self-concept. In early stages of development, the focus is on general mental abilities. In adolescence, the focus shifts to specific mental abilities such as linguistic,

mechanical, and artistic abilities. This helps individuals understand their true capabilities and plan their future according to their interests and inclinations.

- **Social Groups:** Humans do not interact as isolated individuals but as members of groups. Self-perceptions and self-attitudes develop under social living conditions and should be understood within this context. In every social situation, individuals display unique and different behavior patterns.
- **Culture:** Psychology explains cultural differences in self-enhancement, showing that the self develops through:
  - Interaction between the individual and a set of cultural concepts, including beliefs, values, norms, and customs.
  - Interaction between the self and the accompanying psychological environment, influenced by a set of cultural meanings.
  - Interaction between the individual self and the stability of the cultural environment, indicating that culture and self mutually shape each other.

## 2.4. Concept of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem can be defined as follows:

According to "Cattell," it is a personal judgment of one's own worth, which lies between two extremes, positive and negative (Ahmed, 1995, p. 215).

"Shaker" views it as the individual's good estimation of their value and importance, which acts as a motivator for generating feelings of pride and self-respect while avoiding experiences that make them feel inferior (Shaker, 2008, p. 170).

Thus, self-esteem reflects an individual's evaluation of themselves. "Burns" (1982) emphasizes that there are key points involved in the process of self-evaluation:

- The individual compares their self-image with their ideal self-image. These comparisons are considered (by some therapeutic psychological approaches) as indicators of mental health.
- Self-evaluation is influenced by the individual's beliefs about how others evaluate them.
- An individual's self-evaluation includes a balance of success and failure, considering their self-identity. To ensure self-actualization on an individual level, one must adapt to what is available and work towards modifying their shortcomings (Shrim, 2009, p. 215).

Therefore, self-esteem consists of judgments that an individual makes about themselves, expressed through their attitudes towards themselves. These are conscious judgments related to the individual's sense of importance and their distinctiveness from others.

## 2.5. Factors Threatening Adolescents' Self-Esteem

Several factors can threaten the self-esteem of adolescents, including:

- **Criticism and Differential Treatment Among Siblings:** Adolescents who experience criticism and perceive unequal treatment compared to their siblings may develop lower self-esteem.
- **Physical and Mental Abuse:** Any form of abuse can severely damage an adolescent's sense of self-worth.
- **Unpleasant Nicknames:** Being labeled with undesirable nicknames can affect an adolescent's self-perception negatively.
- **Overbearing Control or Neglect:** Excessive control or neglect in dealing with adolescents can hinder their self-esteem.
- **Lack of Acceptance:** Not feeling accepted by family and peers can undermine an adolescent's self-worth.
- **Labeling Children by Their Characteristics or Traits:** Calling adolescents by specific traits or characteristics they possess can impact their self-esteem (Abd Rabbo, 2010, p. 108).

There are many factors that threaten adolescents' self-esteem, most of which are family-related. Families need to reconsider how they interact with their children, especially during adolescence, which is a critical period. Instead of discouraging and criticizing them, families should encourage, accept, and boost their children's confidence.

### Applied Aspect:

#### 1. Exploratory Study

##### 1.1 Study Sample:

The primary study sample was randomly selected from two streams: the scientific stream specializing in Experimental Sciences and the literary stream specializing in Literature and Philosophy. The sample consisted of 30 students, including 20 males and 10 females, from Chérif Yahia High School in Achacha, Mostaganem province.

##### Study Tools:

The self-esteem scale developed by researcher "Abd Rabbo Ali Shaaban" was chosen due to its suitability for the research objective. It was applied to a sample similar to the research sample, and the structure of the scale was distributed across three dimensions as follows:

- **First Dimension: Personal Dimension** (Items 1 to 10)
- **Second Dimension: Psychological Dimension** (Items 11 to 19)

- **Third Dimension: Social Dimension** (Items 20 to 28)

The items were scored according to the following key: Yes (1) - Sometimes (2) - No (3).

## 2.1 Psychometric Properties of the Research Tool:

The psychometric properties of the self-esteem scale were re-validated before application.

### Validity:

The validity was calculated using internal consistency validity, where Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between the scores of each item and the total score of the dimension it belongs to, and then the correlation between each dimension and the total score was calculated. The results are show in Table 1:

Table 1: Results of Calculating Discriminative Validity.

The Numbers	The Dimensions	Correlation Coefficient	Moral Significance	Significance Level
1	Personal dimension	0.80	0.00	0.01
2	Psychological	0.70	0.00	0.01
3	Social	0.65	0.00	0.01

We observe from the table that all dimensions of the questionnaire are statistically significant at the 0.01 significance level. There is a high correlation between each dimension and the overall score, indicating that the questionnaire possesses a high degree of validity.

**Reliability:** The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using two methods:

- **Split-half reliability:** The reliability of the scale was calculated using two methods:
- **Split-half method:** The results are shown in Table (2).

Table No. (02) represents the calculation of reliability using the split-half method:

Reliability	Correlation Coefficient
The scale as a whole	0.89

It is clear from the table that the correlation coefficient reached 0.89, indicating that the questionnaire has a high degree of reliability. **Cronbach's alpha method:** The results are shown in Table (3).

Table No. (03) illustrates the calculation of the correlation coefficient using the overall Cronbach's alpha, and the result was as follows:

Reliability	Correlation Coefficient
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The scale as a whole	0.78
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It is clear from Table No. (03) that the item score according to Cronbach's alpha was estimated at 0.78, indicating that the questionnaire has a satisfactory level of reliability.

## 2. Main Study:

**2.1 Study Methodology:** The descriptive method was used, as it is the most suitable for this study.

**2.2 Main Study Sample and Its Characteristics:** The main study sample was selected randomly from two groups: the science group specializing in experimental sciences and the arts group specializing in literature and philosophy. The sample consisted of 80 students, including 25 males and 55 females.

### 2.2 Sample Characteristics:

#### By Gender:

Table No. (4) represents the distribution of the main study sample by gender:

Gender	Number	Percentage
Females	55	69 %
Males	25	31 %
Total	80	100 %

We observe from the table that the percentage of females is greater than the percentage of males, with females accounting for 69%, while males account for 31%.

**By branch:** Table No. (5) represents the distribution of the main study sample by branch:

The branches	The Number	The Percentage
Experimental Sciences branch	40	50 %
Literature and Philosophybranch	40	50 %
Total	80	100 %

We observe from the table that the percentage of students in the Experimental Sciences branch is equal to the percentage of students in the Literature and Philosophy branch, both accounting for 50%.

## 2.4. Main Study Tools

The study relied on the Self-Esteem Questionnaire designed by Abdel Rabbo Ali Shaaban. Its psychometric properties were revalidated in the pilot study and applied to the research sample by researcher Malak Lamia.

## 3. Presentation and Discussion of Results for the First Hypothesis:

The first hypothesis states: "There are statistically significant differences between the average scores of males and the average scores of females among second-year high school students in self-esteem." The results are illustrated in the following tables:

Table No. (06) presents the results of the t-test for the Self-Esteem Scale.

Category	Number	Arithmetic average	Standard Deviation	Test (t)		
				value (t)	degree of freedom	Value (Sig)
Males	25	65.3600	20.55862	-1.031	75	0.306
Females	55	70.2308	18.85925			
Total	80					

We observe from the table that the differences between the average scores of males and females, which amounted to 0.306 at the 0.05 significance level, with a sig. value of -1.306, are greater than the threshold value. This indicates that there are no statistically significant differences between the average scores of males and females among second-year high school students in terms of self-esteem.

The results of the table indicate that there are no differences in the level of self-esteem among a sample of high school students based on gender. This is despite the fact that adolescents, whether male or female, may show differences in thinking patterns, perception of various situations, the degree of feeling these situations, and in valuing the individuals who influence them.

This result can be attributed to the fact that males and females have become more similar in their social formation as a result of cultural globalization, which has diminished the differences between them.

The obtained results are consistent with the study by Farahi Faisal (2009), which concluded that there are no statistically significant differences in self-esteem between male and female vocational training students. Additionally, Al-Anzi's study (2005), which included 400 male and female basic education students, found no differences in self-esteem between genders. The results are also supported by Abu Jahal's study (2003), which found no statistically significant relationship in the self-esteem scale attributable to the gender variable.

### Presentation and Discussion of Results for the Second Hypothesis:

The second hypothesis states: "There are differences in the level of self-esteem among second-year high school students attributed to the specialization variable." The results are shown in the following table:

Table No. (07) illustrates the results of the test (t).

Test (t)			Standard Deviation	Arithmetica verage	Number	Category
Value sig	Degrees of Freedom	Value (t)				
0.959	78	0.052	20.04545	69.0250	40	scientific
			18.65366	68.8000	40	literary
			80			Total

We observe from Table No. (07) that the sig value (0.959) is greater than the significance level (0.05), indicating that there are no differences in the level of self-esteem among a sample of secondary school students based on the specialization variable.

The results suggest that the specialization factor does not affect an individual's self-esteem, especially since the process of guiding students is based on their preferences and takes into account their abilities and readiness, which provides a degree of academic satisfaction. Self-esteem is more influenced by physical and emotional aspects.

This result is consistent with the study by Abdel Malik (1981), which confirms that there are no statistically significant differences between students in the literary section and students in the scientific section in their self-esteem (Abdel Rabbo, 2010, p. 107).

### Suggestions

- Pay attention to all the changes that occur in adolescents, including physical, mental, and social growth, without neglecting the religious aspect, which is a fundamental part of forming an adolescent's personality.

- Develop planned educational programs to prepare for this stage, equip adolescents for all the changes they will undergo, help them accept and adapt to these changes, and foster a spirit of competition among school-going adolescents through organizing scientific, sports, and religious competitions.
- Encourage adolescents to invest their free time in useful activities and hobbies.
- Foster self-confidence and acceptance of individual differences among adolescents, providing them with the opportunity to achieve self-esteem.
- Conduct developmental and preventive guidance sessions that allow adolescents to develop their self-concept.
- Raise family awareness of their vital role in achieving emotional and psychological adjustment for adolescents by opening channels of communication among family members, encouraging effective dialogue, and discussing all matters related to their academic and personal lives.

## Conclusion

Adolescence is characterized by a set of unique traits and needs that adolescents strive to fulfill. Families and educators must consider these needs and work to satisfy them. It is also essential to develop the student's abilities and talents, fulfill their need for knowledge, and instill various attitudes and ethical values. This can be achieved by providing both material and moral resources, and by designing programs that address these needs and the characteristics of the students, motivating them to work and succeed. Encouraging them to engage in activities they enjoy and praising their efforts, even if the achievements are small, can significantly boost their self-confidence and self-esteem. This is particularly crucial during secondary education, which acts as a bridge between basic education and higher education. This period coincides with adolescence, a phase marked by numerous changes that can influence the behavior and personality of the adolescent.

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