Self Esteem Between Youth

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ABSTRACT   *Self-esteem as the affective component of self-concept refers to a person's sense of value and worth, his sense of competence and adequacy and his sense of self satisfaction. It is the personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitude the individuals hold towards themselves. Some synonyms of self esteem include self respect, self worth, self regard self acceptance, self satisfaction, self confidence and self love. Self esteem is restricted more to the affective dimension of the self concept. It is a part of and emerges from one's self concept. youth is commonly viewed and experienced as a time of tumult, as one makes the series of transitions from childhood into adulthood. This maturing process presents the adolescent with dramatic physical, emotional, and relational changes and challenges. Thus, the period of adolescence itself can present a strong challenge to the psychological well being of the individual.*

Introduction

Many personality theorists, such as Freud, Adler, and Erickson, have suggested that personality, including self-esteem, is formed during the early years of childhood and adolescence (Schultz, 1990). They advocated that self-esteem was formed based on interpersonal interactions and on our interpretations of those events (Adler, 1927; Rosenberg, 1979). People tend to carry forward to the present these interpretations of them and reinforce or modify them based on new interpersonal contacts. Steffenhagen and Burns (1987) in their discussion on self-esteem noted that self-esteem was a construct created out of our past constructs about the world. They believed that people tended to interpret the past from their present point of view and also interpreted the present on the basis of their past constructs. They concluded that each person's self-esteem was always changing because it was based on a comparison of their present actions, their past beliefs, and their ability to attain future goals. Self-esteem as the affective component of self-concept refers to a person's sense of value and worth, his sense of competence and adequacy and his sense of self satisfaction. It is the personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitude the individuals hold towards themselves (Coppersmith, 1967). Some synonyms of self esteem include self respect, self worth, self regard self acceptance, self satisfaction, self confidence and self love. Self esteem is restricted more to the affective dimension of the self concept. It is a part of and emerges from one's self concept. The level of self esteem is the evaluative component of the self concept and presumes a well defined self concept. It refers to the evaluation which the individual makes and maintains with regards to himself. It expresses the attitudes of approval and disapproval and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant and successful and worthy. Strong positive self-concept produces high self-esteem. In other words one is the prerequisite of the other. The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Psychology (1983) has elaborately defined self esteem as a "term given to the evaluation an individual makes of and applies to himself/herself. It can express positive or negative feelings and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself/herself to be significant, capable and worthy. Although self-esteem is a concept which may be applied to specific areas of experience, it is always applied to general feelings of worthiness." Nathaniel Branden (1969) defines a high self-esteem "as the integrated sum of self-confidence and self-respect, i.e. positive self-esteem is the experience that a person is competent to live and worthy of happiness." Cicchetti (1991) states, "the high self esteem person is eager and excited by new challenges. He seeks the unfolding of his abilities and potentialities to the fullest extent. He is not afraid to face choices, judgments and actions. He seeks joyful fulfillment and meaningful relationships. Cicchetti further states that feeling f worthlessness motivates people with negative self-esteem. Feeling worthless is not the same being worthless, its impact on

one's behavior is the same. The person with low self-esteem is often overwhelmed by anxiety and fear. A person who is haunted by chronic fears retreats from the challenges of life and tends to bury himself in the safety of the familiar, routine and undemanding choices and decision making are avoided. Self-renunciation and self-rejection become part of behavior. Avoidance and escape from reality becomes a way of life. The behavior of persons with high self esteem is motivated by/mental health, rationality, self-confidence, trust, desire to achieve happiness, desire to use one's consciousness to be fullest-sees life as a series of challenges, confidence and openness, coping, reaching out and inviting life challenges, love of self and self existence. On the other hand the behavior of persons with low self esteem is motivated by neurosis, irrationality, self doubt, and fear, desire to minimize pain, desire to escape one's consciousness strategies to withdraw from life, defense mechanisms – distortions, repression and evasion, fears that one is inadequate and unfit for existence. Cicchetti (1991) self esteem is determined by the interpretations given to the perceptions from his social and physical environment. It results from the satisfaction of the basic needs to value himself to be valued by the others. Self-esteem is the correspondence between his concept of self and his ideal self-concept. If people are to have self-esteem there must be a correspondence between their concepts of self and self-ideals (Carlson, Rac, 1965). Recently, researchers have begun to conceptualize self-esteem as a multidimensional construct rather than a one-dimensional construct. Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton (1976) were among the first researchers to empirically explore the multidimensionality of self-esteem. According to Shavelson et al., self-esteem is better conceptualized as a multifaceted, hierarchical system. They proposed a model in which general self-esteem is defined by both academic and non-academic self-concepts. Academic self-concept is divided into self-concepts in specific content areas, such as mathematics and English, while nonacademic self-esteem is divided into social, physical, and emotional self-concepts. Social self-concept is further divided into peer relationships and relationships with significant others while physical self-concept is divided into concepts of physical ability and physical appearance.On the basis of the literature available Fleming and Watts (1980) has summarized many characteristics of high self esteem and low self esteem persons. The characteristics as he found out and listed below May or may not be exhibited in totality by the person who possess high self- esteem. But these provide a frame work to understand the concept of self esteem.

Characteristics of High Self Esteem Persons
Persons with high self esteem tend to identify with their parents because during their childhood they –

A. Had mothers who exhibited higher levels of self-esteem and emotional stability and manifested more realistic orienta-

tion toward life.

B. Had closer relationships with their fathers.
C. Experienced parental acceptance (i.e. parental respect, care, concern and attention) and parental receptivity to individual expression and dissent, within clearly defined limits that were consistently and strictly enforced.
D. Gained confidence in their own abilities through positive parental expectations.
E. Recognized that strong decision making authority rested consistently with either the mother or the father but was not shared by both simultaneously

2. Persons with high self-esteem tend to possess the intrapersonal characteristics described as:

- Respecting, trusting and accepting self, with an appropriate appreciation and love of self.
- Avoiding undue worry about tomorrow's problems, today's events, or yesterday's mistakes.
- Being more self directed, being guided by their own standards and values rather than continually striving to meet cultural expectations, standards and values.
- Guiding their behavior by a well developed sense of ethics
- Having confidence in their own perceptions and judgments, enabling them to be more creative and spontaneous
- Expecting to be successful in their endeavors and expecting to be well received by others.

1.4.a.   Self-Esteem Dimensions
Just a few years ago, theorists knew self-esteem as a holistic judgment of every single individual, but it is explored in the recent years that adolescents and adults will evaluate and judge themselves from various aspects which can be in connection with social, physical, educational and family domains (Gholi 2003).

Social Self –Esteem
The different aspects of social self-esteem can be determined by the answers of the following questions. How do adolescents think of themselves? Do they like the others because they think their ideas are of great value from the others point of view? Do the others accept them in their activities? Do they feel satisfied while they are interacting with others? Will they have good feeling when their social needs are satisfied?

Physical Self- Esteem
Physical self-esteem is attributed to individual judgment and evaluation towards his/her physical potentials which can be emerged as results of physical activities. Thus, an able-hooded person is presumed to have positive self-esteem. Conversely, physical defects and lack of acquiring the appropriate skills will cause negative affects on physical Self-esteem.

Educational Self-Esteem
It is attributed to the individual evaluations and judgment from his/her own as a member of family which is created as results of interaction with the members of either or distant family.

Holistic Self- Esteem
It can be attributed to the entire evaluation of a person from his/her values. This aspect of self-esteem is widely distinctive of the rest of the aspects. In other words, it paves the way for co-ordination and homogeneity. The person with positive holistic self- esteem, she/he knows her/himself a capable person from various social, family and educational aspects. These kinds of people acquire their positive outlook from the positive feedback of family members, peer groups and their own physical abilities. Such kinds of persons can run up the obstructers easily (Ahmadi, 1979). Creation of affectionate relationship between family environment and adolescent is a key element in the adjustment of youth. Because family attachment is a strong instinct in which the members of the family try to be compatible with family norms and families usually encourage the behavior of engendering adjustment which is a cornerstone in the prospective adolescents, adaptation. If the family bond formed is not accompanied with security and trusts feelings, children cannot take

appropriate steps to gain success and make a robust relationship with others. The person can nourish social interest with family support and over generalize it in different areas such as school, marriage and work events, to attain adjustment (Berry, 1974). The main purpose of socialization is the individual adjustment with social environment to facilitate healthy relationship between the individual and society to foster development. Thus, the most significant aspect of socialization is adjustment. We can call a person adjustable when he/she can recognize his/her restrictions and finds various ways to control his desires; on the contrary, a person who follows the opposite path or maladjustment is in constant conflicts with environment. That's why, adjustment is a vital issue. It is a so-called saying that family environment plays the most effective role in shaping the socio-psychological affairs (Tavakol, 2006). As mentioned above, self-esteem has been found to be associated with a Varity of indices of psychological adjustment (Rosenberg, 1965) one popular conclusion from this line of research is that low self-esteem results in poor psychological adjustment. There are several problems with this conclusion, however. Thus, the conceptualization of self-esteem as a multidimensional construct has been well-established. Despite this, the majority of studies investigating the relationship BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND ADJUSTMENT HAVE ASSESSED SELF-ESTEEM AS A ONE-DIMENSIONAL CONSTRUCT (ROGERS, 1961). It self-esteem has different dimensions, might not these different dimension be differentially related to adjustment? For example, it is reasonable to suppose that academic self-esteem might be predictive of academic achievement while social self-esteem might be predictive of participation in extracurricular activities. Recently, some researchers have begun to investigate the relationship between specific self-esteem domains and adjustment. Much of this work has focused on the relationship between academic self-esteem and academic achievement. Calsyn and Kenny (1977) discussed two ways in which academic self-esteem and academic achievement could possibly be related. According to the skill enhancement model, academic self-esteem is primarily a result of academic achievement. In contrast, according to the self enhancement model, academic self-esteem is a main determinant of academic achievement. Using a cross-lagged correlation technique, Calsyn and Kenny (1977) reported that academic achievement was predominant over academic self-esteem over a 6 month period. Thus, Calsyn and Kenny's findings are suggestive of the predominance of achievement over self-esteem.

Earlier Views on Self-Esteem
For a time, Erikson's (1968) theory of identity formation provided one of the most compelling accounts of development through adulthood, and even though he did not develop a theory of self parse, he identified central issues and related developmental conflicts that could have provided the basis for many self definitions. For example, Erikson theorized that it is at the stage of intimacy versus isolation that the young adult first begins to relate his or her own identity to that of another person. This means that the self requires some form of "maturity" in order to develop reciprocity and differentiation in relating to other identities, as, for example, the individual's own identity versus his or her partner, career, parent, etc. Erikson (1968) went further to explain that it is only when the individual can place these various identities into a larger perspective, coordinate them with those of others, and consider them within a temporal context, in terms of appreciating his or her place within the context of society, culture, and history, that the development of self-esteem capacities emerge. Erikson holds that self-definition is based on the degree to which conflicts are experienced and resolved. It is to be noted that little work, if any, seems to have been done on the theory of identity formation and how it influences the development of self-perception and its corollary self-esteem. Brim (1976) gives several reasons for this omission; among them, the fact that we have for too long overemphasized and allowed ourselves to be overly influenced by childhood experiences as predictors of adult personality. Affect has generally been recognized as an important element of self-esteem. The

relevance of affect to self-esteem is based on the role of emotion as a component of the evaluative processes that lead to self-definition. This has been emphasized in the work of neo-Freudians in their respective ways: for Homey (1950), her theory of neurosis is assumed to imply that self-demeaning feelings are at the root of basic anxiety. To cope with it, the individual must construct an idealized image and try to enhance his or her self-esteem. Sullivan (1955) thought that anxiety was caused by threats to one's self-esteem or by rejection and negative evaluation by others. Adler (1927), for his part, held the view that inferiority complex was the result of organ deficiencies and that bodily weaknesses were a threat to self-esteem. This viewpoint, if valid, would place all persons with disability in this category. Epstein's (1973) treatment of self-esteem also emphasized affect. Epstein contended that the major functions of the self-theory were to optimize the pain/pleasure balance and to maintain self-esteem. The process follows a developmental pattern in which threats to the child's sense of self cause him or her an emotional pain or an injury to the psychological self. Other theorists have defined self-esteem in similarly imprecise but more motivational language. Kaplan (1971), for example, has referred to self-esteem as a universal motive, "a dominant motive in the individual's motivational system": a definition that is so wide as to wrongly suggest that self-esteem is synonymous with such terms as desire, impulse, incentive, and drive.

Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence

Some studies seem to see self-esteem and self-confidence within the same light and to use them interchangeably. The failure to see the distinction between the two appears to have contributed to the confusion in the self-esteem literature. Rosenberg (1979), in acknowledging the differences, explains that "Self-confidence essentially refers to the anticipation of successfully mastering challenges or overcoming obstacles or, more generally, [it refers] to the belief that one can make things happen in accord with inner wishes. Self-esteem, on the other hand, implies self-acceptance, self-respect, feelings of self-worth." Self-confidence would appear then to be synonymous with self-efficacy, as defined by banda (1977): the conviction that one can successfully execute a behavior required to produce a desired outcome. While also differenti-

ating between the two terms on the grounds that level of self-confidence at any one moment may be unrelated to an overall level of self-esteem, Dickstein (1977) stated that several experiments purporting to be on self-esteem were, in fact, on self-confidence. This statement is exemplified in Cooper smith's (1967) study in which subjects were requested to estimate the probability of their success at a particular skill or game. Rosenberg (1979) has investigated the role of the importance dimension under the general rubric of psychological centrality: How a particular characteristic is central to one's self-definition. On the dimension of likability, for example, he found that the relationship between likability and self-esteem depended on how important or central the characteristic of likability was to the individual. If, for example, an individual does not care about what people think about him or her, their opinions, good or bad, will not affect the individual's self-esteem. youth is commonly viewed and experienced as a time of tumult, as one makes the series of transitions from childhood into adulthood. This maturing process presents the adolescent with dramatic physical, emotional, and relational changes and challenges. Thus, the period of adolescence itself can present a strong challenge to the psychological well being of the individual. Furthermore, the adolescent is influenced by various social systems, as stated above. Therefore, while normal development presents its Own challenges, numerous social influences can also exert conflicting demands upon the adolescent. One such system is the adolescent's family, which has been one of the strongest influences upon his or her psychological development and functioning throughout childhood, and remains as such throughout this transitional period of development (Ruch, 1970). The youth are the prospective personalities of every society, in the near future it is of great importance to pay due consideration to them. Most of the experts self-esteem as called it a basic and fundamental factor in appropriate adjustment due to its leading impact on youngsters and adolescents in laying the foundation of their insights on life experience and inspiring positive attitudes as invaluable assets which can result in socio emotional deserves which can be posited as ingenerated barriers in the perspective challenges which can impede cultural onslaught and anxiety.

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