FAMILY CORRELATES OF SELF-ESTEEM IN ADOLESCENCE: IMPLICATION FOR ADOLESCENT COUNSELLING

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ABSTRACT

Self-esteem is conceptualized as the evaluative aspect of a person that weighs individual beliefs of self-worth, self-acceptance, self-respect and self-satisfaction in relation to others around them which manifests as high or low self-esteem. This study aimed to examine the contributions of the family measured as family relationship and parental verbal abuse, to the expression of self-esteem in adolescence. Four hypotheses were postulated and tested. Three hundred (157 male and 143 female) adolescent secondary school students in Port Harcourt, Rivers State were selected using purposive sampling technique to participate in this study. The participants' ages ranged from 9-17 years (M=13.5, STD= 3.03). Three instruments Hare Self-esteem Scale, Index of Family Relationship Scale, and Parent's verbal abuse inventory were used to assess the participants in cross-sectional survey design, while data was analysed with multiple regression statistics on SPSS vs 21. Findings indicated that unlike sex, poor family relationship and high parental verbal abuse significantly predicted low self-esteem in adolescence. This result shows interpersonal relationships within the family have great import on adolescents' ability to express healthy self-esteem. The study recommends mandatory self-esteem enhancement counselling for adolescents before the completion of secondary school education.

Keywords: Adolescence, Counselling, Family, Self-Esteem

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

In general, counselling psychology as an applied field of psychology is concerned with issues relating to a client's psychological well-being and adjustment challenges rather than symptoms and psychopathology (Chair, 2007; Madukwe, 2017). Madukwe, (2017), defined counselling psychology as an area in psychology in which attempt is made to help individuals who are relatively normally functioning but experiencing developmental, adjustment or transitional problems, to achieve a solution. Meaning that to help counsellees resolve their challenges, counsellors must be adept at understanding the contributions, provisions or dispositions of the individual's developmental stage.

Adolescence is a unique developmental stage particularly because of its transitional nature. Unlike other developmental periods, the period of adolescence poses a myriad of challenges from diverse directions that leave the person feeling mostly confused, uncertain and vulnerable. As such adolescents have been noted to be prone to such problems like anxiety, depression, alcohol and drug abuse, low self-esteem, conduct disorders, suicide, sexuality related challenges, school performance and personality formation difficulties. And many times, in counselling adolescents present with conduct-related problems which could be indicative of an underlying challenge of low self-esteem.

Humans have been described as distinct from other animals because of their capacity to develop the 'self' (McKay & Fanning, 2016). The self connotes a person's recognized identity, the physical and psychological attributes that are unique to an individual (Shaffer, 2005) which he or she may accept or reject. The development of the Self starts at infancy and continues to other developmental stages. During adolescence, development of the self or identity has been described as a major developmental challenge due to the many physiological changes and social expectations, that many people at this period of life find confusing. Okwaraji, Nduanya, Obiechina, Onyebueke, and Okorie, (2018) opined that adolescence is the critical period for the development of self-esteem and self-identity, and that low self-esteem may endanger adolescents' emotional development. At the adolescence stage of development individuals become prone to re-evaluate their sense of self due to the many changes they face and the desire for social acceptance. The outcome of such evaluation determines a person's self-esteem or sense of self-worth in relation to others around him or her. Self-esteem is seen as the evaluative aspect of the self that relates to an individual's thoughts and feelings of self-worthiness, self-acceptance, self-respect and self-satisfaction. Rosenberg in (Nassar-Macmillan & Cashwell, 1997) stated that a high self-esteem indicates a personal sense of self-respect and self-worth, whereas a low self-esteem implies self-rejection, self-dissatisfaction, and self-contempt. Okwaraji, Nduanya, Obiechina, Onyebueke, and Okorie, (2018) studied the prevalence of locus of control, self-esteem and depression among adolescent students in two rural communities and reported 28.7% prevalence rate for low self-esteem. The authors recommended regular adolescent counselling for adolescents with low self-esteem in the communities.

In a study on how system justifying beliefs predict self-esteem and behavior of early adolescents in America, Godfrey, Santos and Burson, (2019), reported a positive relationship between system-justifying beliefs and self-

esteem at the start of early adolescence but a greater decline in self-esteem in the following two years. The authors concluded that early adolescence is a critical development period and that system justifying beliefs adolescents hold at this time could undermine their self-esteem. Similarly, Orth, (2018) studied family environment factors that predicted the development of individual differences in self-esteem among US citizens from ages 8 to 27 years. The result showed that family environment in early childhood predicted self-esteem as children grew and that this effect continued till early adulthood.

The family and parents form crucial aspects of the adolescent's social system. As an interactive unit, the family provides the opportunity for social, political, economic and religious contact and support for the members. The family performs the functions of child rearing and socialization through the parents while creating opportunity for all members parents, children and siblings to share love, warmth and companionship. Adolescents in the family need support, care and guidance from significant adults (like parents and siblings) to help them navigate through the psychosomatic and social contradictions this stage poses. However, Farkas and Johnson in (Hanley, Sefi, Cutts & Lennie, 2013) described adult caregiving at this point as "fluctuating from supporting individuals in developing their own autonomous thinking on the one hand

and condemning them for their self-centeredness on the other" (p.33). Adults in the family (parents and older siblings) are usually the first to offer this care. Aditi (2016) conducted a research on the correlation between family environment and self-esteem of adolescents in Bathinda, India. The authors reported that a significant correlation exists between the family environment and self-esteem of adolescents and that self-esteem of adolescents is positively correlated to moral religious emphasis and negatively correlated to conflict dimension of family environment scale. Yen, Ko, Huang, Liu and Yen, (2008), investigated self-esteem, family, peer and school factors in a large-scale representative Taiwanese adolescent population. They reported that among 9586 participants (response rate: 86.3%), the prevalence of low self-esteem was 12.3%. The risk factors associated with low self-esteem in univariate analysis included female sex, older age, residency in urban areas, disruptive parental marriage, low family income, family conflict, poorer family function, less satisfaction with peer relationships, less connectedness to school, and poor academic performance. After adjusting the effects of sex, age and location, only subjects with higher family conflict, poorer family function, lower rank, decreased satisfaction in their peer group, and less connectedness to school were indicative of low self-esteem.

Considering the position of parents in a child's life, parental practices and behaviours have been said to have long-lasting and profound impact on adolescents' well-being (Terna, 2014). Mogonea and Mogonea, (2013) recognized that parents' attitude towards a child alongside the adolescent's experiences and perceptions significantly influence the formation of a positive self-esteem. Various studies (Boudreault-Bouchard, Dion, & Hains, Vandermeerschen, Laberge, Perron, 2013; Garcia, Serra, Zacares, & Garcia, 2018; Riquelme, Garcia & Serra, 2018; Terna, 2014) have related parenting styles to different self-esteem levels in adolescents. Parental verbal abuse is defined as utterance by a parent that devalues the child's self-worth, undermines the child's capabilities, threatens the child with harm, withholds or withdraws attention, love and support or make the child feel unnecessarily guilty and unworthy of living (Loh, Calleja, & Restubog, 2011). Parental verbal abuse can be discussed either as a parenting practice or behavior that is not specific to any parenting style as classified by Baumrind in (Mogonea & Mogonea, 2013; Terna, 2014). As such, whether verbal abuse would occur or not seems to be more dependent on the personality of the parent involved, the prevailing circumstance and the parent's relationship with the adolescent. Parental verbal abuse could be in form

of name-calling, shaming, berating, discrediting, accusing, shouting, insulting, intimidating, threatening, cursing, demeaning and /or undermining among others. Loh, Calleja, and Restubog, (2011) listed the following nine categories of words used by parents which inflict emotional pain or distress on adolescents; put down and shaming, rejection, blaming, fault exaggerating, threat, invoking harm, regrets, unfair comparison, and negative prediction. According to them put-down and shaming a child represented well over half of all the combined verbal abuse categories found in the study. Offordile, (2012) conducted a research on the influence of parent-child communication patterns on self-esteem and academic achievement of in-school adolescents in Enugu State. The findings revealed that parent-child communication patterns significantly influence the in-school adolescents' self-esteem. In a study on the role of the family in building adolescents' self-esteem, Mogonea and Mogonea, (2013) reported increase in self-esteem among teenagers whose parents received counselling on the stimulation of adolescents' self-esteem. The increase in the adolescents' self-esteem reflected in their academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

The role of family and parents in the developmental outcome of children especially those at the adolescent stage has become a major concern in the social world due to the many troubles

that emerge at this point. Self-esteem as a major developmental and socialization outcome during adolescence is investigated in this study. Whether family correlates particularly, common parental practices or behaviors like verbal abuse and the degree of family relationship (appropriate or poor) serve as protective or risk factors for the development and expression of healthy levels of self-esteem among adolescents in Port-Harcourt is largely unknown. The study therefore investigated predictive power of family correlates (parent's verbal abuse and family relationship) as well as sex on self-esteem of adolescents.

Purpose of the study
The aim of this study is to investigate whether:
1. Parental verbal abuse would predict the self-esteem expression in adolescence.
2. Family relationship would predict the self-esteem expression in adolescence.
3. Sex would predict the self-esteem expression in adolescence.
4. Parental verbal abuse, family relationship and sex would predict the self-esteem expression in adolescence.

Hypotheses
1. Parental verbal abuse will not be a statistically significant predictor of self-esteem expression among adolescents Port Harcourt
2. Family relationship will not be a statistically significant predictor of self-esteem expression among adolescents Port Harcourt
3. Sex will not be a statistically significant predictor of self-esteem expression among adolescents Port Harcourt
4. Parental verbal abuse, family relationship and sex will not statistically significant interact to predict self-esteem expression among adolescents Port Harcourt

METHOD

Participants
A total of 300 participants comprising of 157 male and 143 females from Port Harcourt, Rivers State were involved in the study. The participants were secondary school students from Junior secondary class 1 to Senior secondary class 3 (JSS 1 - SS 3). Participants age ranged between 9 - 17 years with a mean of 13.5 and a standard deviation of 3.03. They were sampled from schools and teens summer camp in Port Harcourt using purposive sampling technique. Only students who lived with either or both of their parents, who had no known report of misbehaviour in the school and those whose name were listed in the class register were selected to participate in the study.

Instruments
Hare Self-esteem Scale: This was developed by Hare, (1985). It is a 30-item inventory scale designed to assess the influence of three factors- peer group, school and home on the self-

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esteem of children in primary and secondary school. The items: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, 26, 28 and 30 are directly scored, while the other items are scored reversely on a 1- 4 Likert scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (4) strongly agree. Hare, (1985) provided the psychometric properties for American samples while Anumba in (Omoluabi, 1997a) provided the properties for Nigerian samples. The norm for Nigerian males and females were 87.70 and 91.14 respectively. The Nigerian norms or mean scores are the basis for interpreting the scores of participants, hence scores higher than the norms indicate high self-esteem, while scores lower indicate low self-esteem.

Index of Family Relations Scale: This scale was developed by Hudson, (1982). It is a 25-item inventory designed to measure the extent, severity or magnitude of family problems that family members have in their relationships with one another. Essentially IFR assesses family distress/discord and the impact of family disharmony on individuals. The items on the questionnaire are scored directly and reversely, of which: 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 19, 22, 24 and 25 are directly scored while the others are scored reversely on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from (1) Rarely or none of the time to (5) Most or all of the time. Hudson (1982) provided the psychometric properties for American samples while Anumber in (Omoluabi,

1997b) provided the properties for Nigerian samples. The norm for Nigerian males and females is 24.61. The Nigerian norms or mean scores are the basis for interpreting the scores of the participants. Scores higher than the norms indicate poor family relations, while scores lower indicate appropriate family relations.

Parental Verbal Abuse Inventory This instrument was developed by the researcher. It is a 40- item inventory designed to measure the occurrence and severity of parental verbal abuse experienced by children in secondary school. The items in the questionnaire are directly and reversely scored; of which 4, 7, 10, 15, 19, 24, 27, 29, 32, 34, 35 and 40 are scored reversely, while the others are scored directly on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from (1) Never to (4) Always. The survey has both face and content validity which was obtained using 50 participants from Owerri, Imo State for pilot study. The pilot study involved 20 males and 30 females aged between 10 - 17 years old. The data generated was subjected to item analysis. The analysis yielded a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .93 and a norm of 81.82 for both male and female adolescents. A concurrent validity of (r= .53, p< .01) was obtained by correlating the PVAI with the Index of Family Relationship. The norm obtained is the basis for interpreting the scores of participants therefore, scores higher than the norm indicate high level of parental verbal abuse. Demographic

variables like age, sex, educational level and which of the parents the participants lived with were also assessed. Age was recorded as continuous (interval) variable, sex as a nominal variable with males coded as 1 and females 0.

Procedures

Ethical approval for this study was given by the Departmental Board of the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Imo State University, Owerri in Nigeria. A letter of identification gotten from the Head of Department was presented to the Principal of the selected schools while requesting for permission to involve the students in the study. Assent was assumed following the school management approval, however, each form teacher was given an informed assent form to fill on behalf of the students in the class. In each school, the survey began with introduction of the researcher to the students by the teacher. The students were then adequately informed of the goals of the research and were made to understand that participation or non-participation in the study would have no impact on their school work. Those who showed unwillingness to participate in the study were permitted to leave. Participants who met the study inclusion criteria were selected using purposive sampling method, this method helped us to ensure that participants in the study lived with at least one of their parents. Anonymity was ascertained by making sure that no

personal identifying information of the participants were collected, and they were informed that all information collected shall be stored in a password protected computer, would not be shared with a third party and would be used only for the purpose of research. Questionnaire administration was carried out in five randomly selected schools; Butter Stone International school, Gadgiff Schools, Mom School, AA-International School, Excellent Pearl School and a Teens Summer Camp selected using purposive sampling, all in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The face-to-face method was used in the distribution and administration of the three questionnaires to the participants. A total of three hundred and twenty (320) questionnaires were distributed to the participants individually and the survey was completed without time restrictions. Completed questionnaires were collected or retrieved within two days after administration in all the research locations.

The survey started with asking demographic information such as sex, age, educational level and signifying if they live with father or mothers. The Hare Self-esteem Scale (HSS) was first, followed by Index of family relationship Scale (IFR), then Parent's verbal abuse Scale (PVAS) was the last. It took averagely 15 - 20 minutes to respond to the questionnaires for those who did not take theirs home and 317 copies of the questionnaires were

returned. The data cleaning process revealed twelve (12) copies not responded to and five (5) copies improperly and inadequately completed. As such, seventeen copies of the returned questionnaires were discarded, the remaining three hundred (300) copies were organized and presented for data analyses. The entire process of questionnaire administration and collection occurred within two weeks.

Design and Statistics

This is a descriptive study with cross sectional survey design. The multiple regression statistics was used because the study examined the correlation and predictive power of parental verbal abuse and family relationship and sex on the of self-esteem manifested by adolescents.

RESULTS

Table I: Summary of inter-Correlations between the Parental Verbal Abuse, Family Relationship, Sex and Self-Esteem

Predictors	N	Pearson r	Sig.
Parental Verbal Abuse	300	-.377	.000*
Family Relationship	300	-.445	.000*
Sex	300	-.132	.011*

*Note: * = Significant, NS = Not Significant*

The correlation result from Table I above revealed a significant moderate negative relationship between parental verbal abuse and self-esteem (r= -.38, p<.01), indicating that as scores on parental verbal abuse increase the scores on self-esteem decrease. This means that higher parental verbal abuse is related to lower self-esteem in adolescence. The result on family relationship and self-esteem showed a significant moderate negative relationship (r= -.45, p<.01), indicating that as scores on family relationship increased the scores on self-esteem decrease. This implies that poor family relationship is related to lower self-esteem in adolescence. The result also showed a significant negative relationship between sex and self-esteem (r= -.13, p<.05), indicating that

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males manifest lower self-esteem than
females.

Table II: Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses with Self-Esteem as the Criterion Variable

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Parental Verbal Abuse	-.078	.030	-.166	-2.592	.010*
Family Relationship	-.193	.037	-.337	-5.251	.000*
Sex	-1.349	.958	-.073	-1.407	.160^NS

Note: $R = .472$, $R^2 = .222$, Adjusted $R^2 = .215$, $F(3,296) = 28.235$, $p = .000$

According to Table II above, the regression coefficient ($\beta = -0.08$) indicates that for every one unit increase in parental verbal abuse, self-esteem decreases by 0.08 unit. The multiple linear regression result ($t = -2.59$, $p = .01$) indicates that parental verbal abuse significantly predicts self-esteem. Hence, the first null hypothesis that parental verbal abuse will not significantly predict self-esteem of adolescents is rejected.

In the second finding, the regression coefficient ($\beta = -0.19$) that for every increase in poor family relationship, self-esteem decreases by 0.19 unit. This result ($t = -5.25$, $p < .01$) also indicates that family relationship significantly predict self-esteem. Therefore, the second null hypothesis that family relationship will not significantly predict self-esteem of adolescents is rejected.

The third regression coefficient ($\beta = -1.35$) indicates that in comparison to female adolescents, the self-esteem of male adolescents decreased by 1.35. However, the result ($t = -1.41$, $p > .05$) indicates that sex is not a statistically significant predictor of self-esteem. Hence, the third null hypothesis that sex will not significantly predict self-esteem of children is accepted. Generally, the standardized regression coefficients show that family relationship is the strongest predictor of self-esteem in adolescence followed by parental verbal abuse.

Finally, the result showed that the relationship between self-esteem and parental verbal abuse, family relationship and sex ($R = .472$) is moderately strong and positive. Together, parental verbal abuse, family relationship and sex accounted for 21% of the variation in self-esteem. The ANOVA result $F(3,296) = 28.235$, $p <$

.01) shows that together parental verbal abuse, family relationship and sex significantly predict self-esteem. Therefore, the fourth null hypothesis that parental verbal abuse, family relationship and sex will not significantly predict self-esteem is rejected.

DISCUSSIONS

The result of this study has shown that majority of the participants manifests low self-esteem, parental verbal abuse and poor family relationship do occur at varying rates and that the rate of low self-esteem occurrence did not differ across sex.

The first finding that parental verbal abuse is a significant predictor of low self-esteem in adolescence was expected as parental verbal abuse would consistently undermine an adolescent's sense of self- (worth, value, respect and approval) and could leave them feeling unaccepted. This finding is in line with the reports of Ruth & Fra, (1999) that children who experience greater parental verbal aggression had lower self-esteem, Offordile, (2012) finding that parents-child communication patterns influence in-school adolescents' self-esteem.

The second finding that family relationship is a strong significant predictor of self-esteem in adolescence supports the finding Aditi, (2016) that a significant correlation exists between family environment and self-esteem of adolescents, Yen, Ko, Huang, Liu and

Yen, (2008) reported that adolescents who experienced higher family conflict, poorer family function are indicative of low self-esteem.

The third finding showed that sex is not a significant predictor of self-esteem in adolescence. This finding contradicts Moksnes and Espnes, (2013) report that boys report higher self-esteem than girls, as well as, Ezeokana, Obi-Nwosu & Okoye, (2014) finding that being male or female significantly influenced their self-esteem status of adolescents, with males street children showing higher self-esteem status than females and Yen, Ko, Huang, Liu and Yen, (2008) that reported the female sex as a risk factor for low self-esteem.

Lastly, the finding that together parental verbal abuse, family relationship and sex were significant predictors of self-esteem in adolescence supports reports from previous studies. Orth (2018) reported that family environment in early childhood continued to predict self-esteem till early adulthood and Aditi, (2016) report that self-esteem is negatively correlated to family conflicts. This finding shows that parents and family remain important agents of socialization in adolescence. The interpersonal relationships in the family hold great import for adolescent's self-perception and self-acceptance, individual sex notwithstanding.

Implications of the Study

1.   This study has practical, social

and educational implications for counsellors working with adolescents indicative of low self-esteem. To improve the self-esteem level or status, it is important to know the contributory factors so that counselling assessment would engage adolescents in those areas. The findings of this study provide a guide for counsellors working with adolescents, it is important to include family relationships and parents' verbal abuse as basic areas of assessment when evaluating and treating self-esteem among adolescents. Previous studies also provide evidence-based strong links between low self-esteem and many delinquent behaviours (e.g., stealing and fighting), onset of psychological problems (depression, anxiety, substance abuse) and poor performance at school, home or work; counselling of adolescents in rivers state should incorporate regular self-esteem assessment and enhancement therapy.

2. Educational implications of this study relate to the need to teach parents on the right ways to speak or communicate with their adolescent children without harming their self-esteem. During counselling, psychoeducation objectives should be targeted at teaching parents about the sensitivity of the adolescence stage of development and the importance of developing healthy sense of identity and worth (self-esteem) should be given.

3. Implications for gendered roles; sex as a biological inheritance of being male or female does not predispose a person to be of low or high self-esteem. Therefore, the myths and stereotypes that paints females as the inferior sex should be discarded and replaced with more rational, healthy and helpful information about the female sex during counselling. Counsellors working with female adolescents must understand that females have the capacity to develop healthy self-esteem and help them overcome any negative feelings towards self that generates from being females. It is also imperative that male adolescents who attend counselling sessions receive adequate self-esteem assessment and self-esteem enhancement (restoration) therapy.

4. This study also has child rearing (social) implications especially for Igbo, Nigerian and African parents who mostly assume that their words will not have negative impact on their children especially when spoken unintentionally and in anger. While training a child, attention must be given to interpersonal relationships among family members and parents' verbal abuse because their damaging effects to adolescents is not peculiar to any sex. Also, there is need to enhance the family environment to ensure healthy development process for adolescents.

Conclusion
This study concludes that majority of the adolescents in Rivers State exhibit

low self-esteem, reported poor family relationship and high parental verbal abuse. Poor family relationship and high parental verbal abuse contribute greatly to the expression of low self-esteem in adolescence. It was therefore recommended that self-esteem enhancement programmes be established and made a compulsory part of secondary school training in Rivers State. Also, policies or strategies aimed at parental verbal abuse reduction and improvement of family relationship should be introduced and implemented in the state.

Recommendation

1. Adolescent counselling assessment for self-esteem should incorporate evaluation of their family relationship and experience of parental verbal abuse, the sex of the client notwithstanding.
2. Counsellors involved in adolescent counselling and trainees in this area should offer self-esteem enhancement therapies to adolescent clients.
3. Rivers State government and school owners should drive and ensure the presence of counselling psychologists in secondary schools and there is need to ensure that each adolescent student attend self-esteem enhancement counselling sessions before concluding their secondary school education.
4. Self-esteem enhancement counselling should be built into secondary school curriculum and offered to the students free of charge.
5. There is need to establish a parenting orientation campaign that would target parents with adolescent children and teach them new and proper parenting behaviours especially those that would encourage appropriate family relationship and correct parent-child communication patterns.

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