

Psychological Aspects of Self-Esteem in Adolescents

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Abstract

Introduction: This paper aims at analysing the teenager in the complexity of his personality structure, as well as his relations with his family and his attitude towards different social experiences. Identifying the level of self-esteem, self-image, and self-confidence will lead to the emphasis on the psycho-diagnosis model of approach towards the teenager, which has as an objective the support of his personal development.

The aim of this paper is to identify elements, variables and characteristics of the process of image formation- the self-valued personality- which can outline a psycho diagnosis model, in order to develop a counselling program for adolescents.

The methods we used are the following: observation and semi-structured interview (type of family, number of siblings, age, resource people, means of communication, relations with others and ability of self-knowledge); these are completed by the data collected through the psychometric instrument known as The Three-dimensional Scale of Self-Esteem.

Results: The statistical results indicate that the relationship between self-image and self-confidence (SI, SC) is independent of the intellectual level and that the relationship between self-image and self-love (SI, SL) is independent of the number of siblings in the family.

Conclusions: The social capital of an adolescent, his relationships with his family, friends, colleagues, teachers, constitute his immediate reality, the environment where his self-image is formed. Self-esteem in adolescence is a construct which incorporates aspects of self-image, self-love and self-confidence.

Keywords: family, self-esteem, child, parent

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I. Introduction

Relationships in adolescence

Adolescence as a life stage is marked by pursuits, interrogations; it is marked by the sign of self-search. It is the time when the young person faces himself, the world, when his identity is created. At the crossroads of puberty with youth, adolescence marks the transition to adulthood and it is the moment when the teen is propelled into the world.

The plan of personal relationships is in this age stage extended and revealed in the interaction with family, school work (teachers, peers) and the group of friends. The validation of certain personal constructs comes from this area which is often subjected to cognitive and affective filters.

In the context of social relations, the teenager has the opportunity to experience multiple and complex relationships, he has to interact with others and meet the challenges that come from the groups he belongs to.

Broadening the relational sphere correlated with the physical and emotional development process provides a comprehensive picture of the identity structure in adolescence. The interaction with family, friends, teachers and establishing amorous relationships offer the adolescent varied experiences that stimulate introspection and reflection upon himself and the world.

At this age stage, we see a change of power dynamics in the family: the adolescent, being aware of his mental and relational maturity, tends to escape the parental authority and to outline his role within the family. This process of family differentiation creates new opportunities for the teenager in the process of defining his identity.

Self-identity

Self-identity is the organizing and integrating aspect of the psychic life which gathers opinions, ideas, beliefs that an individual has about himself. In adolescence, this process of shaping self-image is strongly influenced by the relationships with others and by the characteristics of the self-knowledge processes.

In this sense, the process of self-knowledge and self-identification is particularly important. The creation of someone's Self as a psychologically complex construct derived from the interpretation of cognitive, affective-motivational and attitudinal elements (Zlate, 2008), brings to our attention a comprehensive approach to adolescence, leading to a detailed analysis of this age stage and to the integration of all elements which influence the passage to adulthood. There are many factors that influence the evolution of someone's self in adolescence and that are

related to the physical and cognitive development, status, family relations, area of residence, sex.

In terms of interactions and self-image formation we should keep in mind the following aspects which influence this process: *maturity, school transition, family* (Adams, Berzonsky, 1999).

Biological changes, hormonal development, accelerated maturation affect the way teenagers perceive themselves. Self image is closely linked to the particular characteristics (combination of shapes, height, and weight) and general physical appearance (the general perception of one's body).

The onset of adolescence coincides with the transition from middle school to high school and it involves a number of changes which the teenager must face. The school transition requires the teenager's familiarisation with a particular type of school, peers, different expectations from teachers and a broad cognitive sphere. These simultaneous changes cause a series of coping strategies that have not been experienced by adolescents in their personal history. In this context, the hypothesis of "the vulnerability of self image when the teenager passes through too many changes and he is bombarded by stress without having adequate coping strategies" (Simmons, 1987) advances.

An important step in terms of school transition is the high school completion and changing status (student, employee, unemployed person).

In the establishment of self analysis, the family and the relationship between the members of the family play a critical role. The family home is the main source of primary socialization, training of personal resources which offer and induce children and young people certain values, norms, attitudes and behaviours (Minuchin and Fishman, 2009).

The teenager experiments and retrieves behaviour patterns, life norms, values and attitudes in the context of family relationships. In this context, there are direct connections between the parental style adopted by the family and the teenager's self-esteem. Studies completed on teenagers reveal the fact that the parents who use educational or positive growth practices have children who valorise themselves, relate well to others and are able to build life skills, as the family atmosphere is one of support and stimulates personal development (Dekovic & Meeus, 1997).

On the other hand, the families that mostly use intrusive parenting practices, for example transferring the feeling of guilt in order to control the behaviour of the teenager, are associated with low self-esteem (Litovsky & Dusek, 1985).

Location is a very important factor in the formation of self-image in adolescence as the type of relationships, values and experiences are circumscribed to roles, norms, and patterns of behaviour which are specific to a social context.

II. Methods

The main **objective** of this study is to investigate the psychological aspects of self-image in adolescence.

The **instruments** which are used are the following: observation, semi-structured interview (type of family, number of siblings, age, resource people, means of communication, relations with others, the ability of self- knowledge) and the Three-dimensional Scale of Self-Esteem (instrument developed by Petruța Daniela Coman).

The **participants** are students pertaining to different schools from Vâlcea. The areas of origin are urban and rural areas. The research includes 325 subjects,

adolescents aged between 14 and 19 years old, high school students (9th grade, 10th grade, 11th grade, and 12th grade) and students from vocational schools.

Working procedure: the participants were informed about this research. We applied the research instruments (The semi-structured interview and The Three-dimensional Scale of Self-Esteem – TSSE) during some frontal (class), small group and individual meetings. From the gathered data we built a database in SPSS. We used the processing units available in the SPSS 16 version in order to present from a statistical standpoint the research sample and to test the hypothesis we proposed.

III. Results

The hypothesis presumes that "the relation between self-image and self-love (SI, SL) is independent of the number of siblings within the family". The working procedure in SPSS was one of partial correlations because the variables presented in the study are related to each other.

Table 1: The results of the test based on partial correlations, statistical description "SI, SL, and No. of siblings"

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Values of self- image	27.57	3.519	325
Values of self-love	28.68	3.629	325
Number of siblings within the family (you included)	2.04	.990	325

In table 1 we have the average of self-image (27.57), the average of self-love (28.68), the standard deviations and the number of cases which were statistically processed (325).

Table 2: The results of the partial correlation test "SI, SL, and No. of siblings"

Control Variables			Self-image-values	Self-love-values	Number of siblings in the family
-none ^a	Value of self-image	Correlation	1.000	.276	-.124
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	.026
		df	0	323	323
	Value of self-love	Correlation	.276	1.000	.018
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	.747
		df	323	0	323
	Number of siblings in the family	Correlation	-.124	.018	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.026	.747	.
		df	323	323	0
Number of siblings in the family	Self-image-value	Correlation	1.000	.281	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	
		df	0	322	
	Value of self-love	Correlation	.281	1.000	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	
		df	322	0	

a. Cells contain zero-order (Pearson) correlations.

The results indicate partial correlation ($r = 0.281$) and total correlation ($r = 0.276$). We note that the values are approximately equal. In this case, the third variable "number of siblings in the family" does not have any explanatory contribution regarding the relation between other variables such as "self-image" and "self-love".

These results indicate the fact that the relation between the "self image" variable and "self love" variable is independent of the number of siblings within the family. The correlation between self-image and self-love after introducing the moderating variable (number of siblings within the family) although it increases after introducing the moderating variable, it remains insignificant from a statistic point of view.

The data collected after applying the questionnaires and the tests was processed in SPSS, using partial correlations in order for us to verify the hypothesis "it is assumed that the relationship between "self-image" and "self-confidence" is independent of the intellectual level".

The statistical results indicate partial correlation ($r = 0.326$) and total correlation ($r = 0.334$). Analysing the data obtained, we notice approximately equal values. In this situation, the third variable "school - the intellectual level" does not have any explanatory contribution regarding the relationship between "self-image" and "self-confidence".

These results indicate the fact that the relationship between the "self-image" variable and "self-confidence" variable is independent of the school of origin (in fact, independent of the intellectual level).

The correlation between self-image and self-confidence after introducing the moderating variable (school-the intellectual level), although it increases after introducing the moderating variable, it remains insignificant from a statistic point of view.

This ascertainment does not exclude the possibility that there is another variable that can play a significant role in the relationship between other variables (Popa, 2010).

Table 3: Results of the partial correlation test, statistic description "Self-image, Self-trust, School"

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Value of self-image	27.57	3.524	324
Value of self-trust	29.27	3.747	324
School	1.32	.466	324

In table 3 we have the average of self-image (27.57), the average of self-love (29.27), the standard deviation and the number of cases that were statistically processed (324).

Table 4: Results of the partial correlation test "Self-image, Self-trust, School"

Control Variables			Value of self-image	Value of self-confidence	School
-none- ^a	Value of self-image	Correlation	1.000	.334	-.229
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		df	0	322	322
	Value of self-confidence	Correlation	.334	1.000	-.077
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	.165
		df	322	0	322
School	Correlation	-.229	-.077	1.000	
	Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.165	.	
	df	322	322	0	
School	Value of self-image	Correlation	1.000	.326	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	
		df	0	321	
	Value of self-confidence	Correlation	.326	1.000	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	
		df	321	0	

a. Cells contain zero-order (Pearson) correlations.

IV Conclusions

Summarizing the conclusions drawn from this study, we present the following aspects:

The social capital of the young person, his relationships with his family, friends, colleagues and teachers constitute his immediate reality, the environment where he develops his self-image.

Self-esteem in adolescence is a construct which incorporates aspects of self-image, self-love and self-confidence.

The variables of the areas of residence (rural/urban), gender and age do not influence the level of self-esteem.

The number of siblings within the family is an independent variable in relation to self-image and self-love.

The intellectual level is an independent variable in relation to self-image and self-confidence.

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