

# The Role of Self Esteem on Early Adolescents Delinquency

Edness Rutta<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Chittaranjan Subudhi<sup>2</sup>

Department of Social Work, Research Scholar Central University of Tamil Nadu, Thiruvavur<sup>1</sup>  
Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Central University of Tamil Nadu, Thiruvavur<sup>2</sup>  
Corresponding author: ednesrutta@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *The study intended to assess the role of self-esteem on early adolescent delinquency. The study adopted a descriptive design. The target population were adolescents aged 12-14 years. The sample of 20 students was purposively selected. Data for this study was collected using the adopted standardised questionnaire which was used to test the levels of self-esteem, the very same measure was used as an interview schedule to capture the feelings and personal perspectives. The study proved a positive relationship between the levels of self-esteem with delinquency behaviour. The children who marked high in self-esteem seem to be active, happy and self-confident. Positive assessment of one self reduces the effect of extreme anger towards others, reduces jealousy, hate and such feelings which in other way are the leading cause to delinquency. Adolescents with high self-esteem seem to have a good control of their negative emotions. The difference between adolescents with high self-esteem and those with low self-esteem is their response towards negative feelings and their resolutions to solve the problem. Really feeling of being enough comes from within a person but for those with low self-esteem they can portray a positive self-esteem but their feeling good and respect is drawn from the environment or circumstances*

**Keywords:** “early adolescence delinquency”, self-esteem, juvenile delinquency

## I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a growth stage where children start to experience physical, psychological and emotional changes which affect their behaviour patterns (Leary, 2011). Early adolescence is the period marked between 7 to 14 years old. The experienced changes once they meet with poor parental control, family break ups, poverty, peer pressure and such experiences the likelihood of a child to develop delinquency behaviour increases. The young adults struggle to find themselves, develop their identities and aspirations while expected to conform to community norms and culture (Raula, 2014). The changes experienced tend to cause depression, according to Hankin et al (1998) the depression rate increases from 2% to 18% in late adolescence. In the process of finding themselves they become sensitive and worried about peer acceptance which increases their vulnerability (Raula, 2014).

### Concept of Self Esteem

Self-esteem is defined as the complication of feelings that guide behaviour, influences attitudes and drives motivation (Harter, 1999). High self-esteem was defined by Deep (2010) as how does a person value, appreciate and acknowledge his/her self-worth and acknowledges self-worth, self-control and competence with the corresponding positive attitude and high self-evaluation. Opposite of this (Harter, 1999) defined low self-esteem as having low self-evaluation, self-criticism and feeling of hopelessness.

Sharma and Agarwala (2015) defined self-esteem as personal global sense of self which includes perceptions of aptitude, self-worth, self-image, self-efficiency and other aspects of self-concept. Deep (2010) said an individual self-perception affects how a person interacts with the outside world. The personal feeling of inadequacy limits an individual to self-improvement, the feeling holds back from exploring the world in fear of failure. Low self-esteem confines a person from personal growth. Likewise (Canevello et al., 2011) said that people's self-perception is very much determined by their immediate experiences and environment.

According to (Nadar et al., 2009) people develop to their full potentials if they have good perception of themselves. People with a positive self-look are explained to be effective and efficient to deal with life hardships and have a good control of their emotions. Adolescents with a positive self-image focus on growth and improvement, while those with low self-perception focus on not making mistakes in life. (Silverstone & Salsali, 2003; Rosenberg & Owen, 2001). Adolescents with low self-esteem are more likely to experience social anxiety and low level of interpersonal confidence. In turn this affects their social interaction with others. (Harter, 1999).

### **Causes of Low Self Esteem**

During adolescence a lot of physiological and psychological changes as a result of hormonal functioning, brings about mood swings which affect the general function of a child. At this point they think seriously about their future and in case the environment does not seem promising to achieve their dreams depression results Depression in early adolescence is caused by many factors including low self-esteem (Hankin, 2006). Other factors which lower self-perception is failures, criticism and rejection (Leary, 2011).

Daigle et al., (2007) explains that most of the people with low self-esteem are diagnosed with multiple disorders. Around 6 to 16% of male teenagers and 29% of female teens have a conduct disorder. These can vary from oppositional defiant disorder which is not necessarily aggressive to antisocial personality disorder, often diagnosed among psychopaths. Peer rejection is also among predictor of low self-esteem (Raula, 2014). This rejection can affect the child's ability to socialize properly and can promote violence, aggressive and deviant behaviour students.

Poor performance in school is among the causes of low self-esteem among students (Brown, 1998). Children with poor performance are more likely to feel bad and lose interest in school. This may lower educational aspirations and educational attachment (Brown, 1998). Abuse at home, children who are physically or sexually abused at home sometimes end up experiencing psychological torture which wears away their level of self-esteem. (Verboom et al. 2014).

### **Early Adolescence and Delinquency**

Every child is a product of their home and the society they live in, According to Laura, (2014) immediate social environment of a child has the family and outside environment is largely determine the level of a person's self-esteem. The quality of parent child relationship matters a lot in the growth of a child emotionally. In adolescence children become emotionally unstable and frequent mood change is observed. The disintegration of traditional institutions like family, church. School and social groups encouraged cooperative relationships among people. Such experiences affects them socially and intellectually (Verboom et al. 2014). According to the developmental research by Moffitt (2006) there are two different types of offenders that emerge in adolescence. The first is an age specific offender referred to as adolescence limited offender for whom juvenile offending begins and ends during the period of adolescence. Moffitt (2006) argues that most teenagers tend to show some sort of antisocial or delinquent behaviour during adolescence and continues into adulthood.

Juvenile delinquency marks escalation in different parts of the world due to socio-cultural and economic changes occurred in urbanization and industrialization influenced family life, causing the breakdown of family values, subsequent growth of social disorganisation which worsened the situation of young adults. (Lober & Farington 2003).

Juvenile delinquency is the issue of concern all over the world. (Lober & Farington 2003). If not well managed it can lead to a number of problems not only to victims but also to families, communities and nations. This study is important since the future of any nations lies in the hands of its young generation so protecting them and assurance of their proper upbringing is the matter of utmost importance. (Lober & Farington 2003).

Previous studies have given a deep insight on the relationship between self-esteem and behaviour influence the issue is still not very much clear on the effect of self-esteem in early adolescence delinquency and the study aims to fill the gap. The findings of the study will inform all stockholders and practitioners on the importance of setting positive environment for students to develop their sense of self. And help social workers in school to design effective individual and collective programs to help students in need.

**II. METHODOLOGY**

The study employed a descriptive case study design and sample of 20 students aged 12 to 14 years participated in the study. The study employed the triangulation of methods in data collection where by questionnaire, interview and observation where used. The study adopted Rosenberg self-esteem scale, the tool was used to test self-esteem levels and the same tool was used to understand the underlying feelings of students. Simple random sampling was used to draw the sample. The themes from qualitative data were identifies and presented in a narrative way.

**Demographic Information of the Students**

**Distribution of Students according to their Age and their self-esteem**

Table 2.1: Students According to their Age and their Self-esteem

Age	Levels					
	High (30-40)		Medium (26-29)		Low(10-25)	
	Numbers	Percentage (%)	Numbers	Percentage (%)	Numbers	Percentage (%)
12	4	66.67	2	33.33	0	0
13	5	71.43	2	28.57	0	0
14	6	85.71	1	14.29	0	0

According to the findings 66.67% of the Students among the students aged 12 years have High self-esteem while 71.43% of the Students among the students aged 13 years have High self-esteem and 85.71% of the Students among the students aged 14 years have High self-esteem where as 33.33% of the Students among the students aged 12 years have Medium self-esteem while 28.57% of the Students among the students aged 13 years have medium self-esteem and 14.29% of the Students among the students aged 14 years have Medium self-esteem and none of the students have low self-esteem among all students. . According to the key informants shows that the Students aged 14 have High Self-esteem rather than Students aged 13 and 12 years.



Figure 2.1:

**Understanding how self-esteem affect behaviour pattern of students**

In understand behaviour pattern of students the information was collected from open ended interview and observation. Children who scored the level of self-esteem between 70% and 80% have also shown high level of self-satisfaction

appreciation and low level of negative affect. Most of the respondents responded to the question as “I am good in my own way”. This implied the matching of data collected through other methods.

All those who marked 70-80% level of self-esteem showed good control of their emotions and easily adjusted to normality after a negative encounter. During small fights and bullying they would easily patch things and forgive and adjust to normality as if nothing happened. Which was interpreted as a good control of one’s emotion and good ability to process and resolve their emotional issues.

### III. STUDY FINDINGS

The study findings showed a positive relationship between self-esteem and delinquency behaviour. Students with high self-esteem are less likely to engage in deviant behaviours and once involved their response to the situation allows reformation.

All respondents in measuring the negative effect they all admitted to experience feelings of inadequacy sometimes. And they had no clear follow up on how often it occurs but they all admitted to experience the feeling. In spite of the feeling their personal worthiness and satisfaction was not shaken by those feelings.

Also on social acceptance 80% of participants had a good sense of belongingness. The feeling of being one of the group, accepted and valued was observed and agreed by respondents, onerespondent said “I don’t know how logical my argument is but I believe my views matters whether accepted or not I think I have right to air my views as one of the group” which was taken as feeling valued no matter the outcome.

### IV. DISCUSSION

Positive personal self-evaluation marks a significant role in decisions made by an individual hence expression of behaviour. Inner dissatisfactions will normally be portrayed in behaviour patterns of an individual. For youth with low self-esteem personal normal weaknesses and disapproval from peers and the community can have devastating impacts on their personality and behaviour. Their ego is severely tortured by normal setbacks an individual can experience. Those with high self-esteem revealed good control of their emotions and good ability to process their emotions. If personal satisfaction is drawn from within, a personal sense of self appreciation is high. Outside validation is good but it shouldnot be the source of ones self-worth. The outside validation has impact but not to the extent of defining oneself based on other people’s views. Most of individuals with low self-esteem draw their sense of self-worth from external source, which can be explained as a source for developing deviance. For the sake of maintaining the feeling of importance and respect it forces a person to go for whatever cost to maintain their image. Someone with high self-esteem can feel bad about a bad day but it doesn’t affect their sense of self-worth unlike those with contingent self-failure will have a signifant hit and experience difficulty handing it (American Psychiatric Association,2013).

### V. CONCLUSION

Children being the future of any nation require a proper upbringing for a future health of a nation. Policies and social institutions need to have proper plans and programs to nurture them. Everychild has inherent potentials and a right to safe and protective environment. As explained by (Herter, 1999) Students’ self-esteem is normally affected during the school years. Stress free environment will help the children to reveal their true self without fear of being judged as slow learners. Instead of appreciating certain qualities every child should be cherished the way she/he is. And school should give opportunity for children to develop their strength without fear of reject.

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