

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM, MENTAL HEALTH AND FEELING OF COMMITTING SUICIDE AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS OF NEKEDE POLYTECHNIC IMO STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between self-esteem, mental health and suicide attempts among in-school adolescents of Nekede Federal Polytechnic, Imo State. The study adopted a correlation survey research design. Two research questions and two hypotheses were tested in the study. The population of the study comprised all in-school Adolescents of Nekede Federal Poly, giving a total of Nineteen Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty (19,250). Using cluster random sampling technique, a sample of 2800 respondents was drawn. The instrument used for data collection were, Adolescent Self- esteem and Mental Health Scale (ASEMHRS) and Adolescent Self-esteem and Suicide Rating Scale (ASESRS). Both instruments were developed by the researchers, vetted and validated by 2 experts in clinical psychology one educational psychology and one in measurement and evaluation. The reliability coefficient of internal consistency for ASEMHRS and ASESRS are 0.78 and 0.81 respectively. Using Cronbach Alpha Statistics, Phi-coefficient/correlation coefficient were used to answer the research questions while the Chi-square Statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed a strong relationship between levels of Self-esteem and Mental Health. The find also revealed a weak relationship between self-esteem and attempt of suicide. Based on the finding of the study, it was recommended that parents should encourage their children and wards to develop high level of self-esteem and confidence since levels of self-esteem has is have strongly associated with their wards mental health. The school should organize seminars for students to enlighten them on the need for one to have self-confidence in him/her. There should be an organized counseling unit mane by counseling experts, where student could be counseled on their mental and suicide related issues.

Keywords: Relationship, Self-esteem, Mental Health, Suicide Attempts, in-school Adolescents.

Introduction

Self-esteem is an integral part of an individual's life, an important factor of self-confidence well-being and a prerequisite for all round achievement. Self-esteem is about one believing in himself, his feeling, opinions, interests, thoughts, values and goals. Kendra (2023) noted that having self-esteem influences how you feel and treat yourself. Having self-esteem motivates one to go after the things he wants in life and his ability to develop healthy and supportive relationship with other. Kendra (2023) opines that having self-esteem promote ones thoughts, emotions, intellectual capabilities, and good behavior pattern.

Self-esteem is the value individuals place on themselves relative to others. It is what one believes and feels about himself. It can mean accepting ones weakness as well as strength and what the feeling that they deserve respect from others (Ying, Zeging, Chenchen and Lulu, 2022). With self-esteem one learns to build on strength and to compensate for weakness (Mind 2023) self-esteem whether high, moderate or low, influence mental health and suicide attempts or feeling of committing suicide among in school adolescents. Person self-esteem can be perceived as positive or negative depending on how one evaluates his worth (Mercy, Fredrick and Mwaura, 2019). High level of self-esteem according to Robinson (2022) is strongly related to happy event, feeling of success, positive effects, less anxiety, less helplessness, more life satisfaction and less depression as compared to students with low self-esteem. UKDISS (2021) found that student moderate or good level of self-esteem performs better academically. Mercy et al (2019), argued that self-esteem education somehow determines the level of property, welfare and security of people. These scholars also noted that self-esteem is the cornerstone of economic and social development and a principle means of improving the welfare of adolescent students.

Adolescence is a sensitive and critical period of development during which individuals bear heavy school-work pressure while also adapting to significant physical and psychological change (Unni and Randi 2019). No wonder Stanley hall in the theory of adolescence described adolescence as a period of 'storm and stress' (Iroegbu, 2015). During this period some adolescents often experience reoccurring negative emotions such as anxiety and depression (Sahin, 2014). Adolescence has been described as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. This transition in most cases leads to confusions conflicts depressions, frustration stress and tension (Meyers& Dewalls, 2015). It is a period of human development that marks the beginning of adulthood; a process of transfer from independent and irresponsible age of childhood (Okwara-Kalu, Ipem, Obinna-Akakuru & Agulanna, 2021).

One of the problems of in-school adolescents is the issue of self-esteem; adolescents in their academic pursuit may experience high, moderate and low self-esteem it has been found that adolescent's self-esteem can positively or negatively influence their mental health and suicide attempts. WHO(2014) described mental health as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potentials can cope with normal stresses of life can work productively and fruitfully and is able to contribute to his or her community adolescents represent an important period for positive mental health development although in most cases, most adolescent report good mental health and high level of well-being the transition into adolescence prove to be a decisive period for development of mental health problem (Unni and Randi, 2019) self-esteem is an integral part of the individuals self-concept and is regarded very important for positive mental health and functionality that self-esteem and mental health

are reciprocally connected associated and interrelated (Chrestina' Nashwa Tarek and Abstesam,2023). Shore (2016); Unni and Randi (2019) identified some factors associated with mental health problems as chronic, non-specific pain, depression, tension and low self-esteem. Another important factor that is implicated in this study is the relationship between self-esteem and suicide attempt or feeling of committing suicide among in-school adolescent. Suicide is a serious public health problem with its long term harmful effects on individuals' families, communities and nations at large. Suicide as a problem affects male and female, old and young individuals; though suicide attempts are found more on young male Sunil, Marjian, Gregory and Aaron 2008).

Adolescents in most cases experience low self-esteem as a result of constant failure, sexual harassments from peers and lecturers financial stress, poor academic performance and fear of failure this may lead to feeling rejection negative thought about self-constantly blaming himself, not appreciating the achievement made so far, thinking he don't deserve to have fun, and that nothing can come out of him, having general poor opinion about himself and having poor sense of value with this low self-esteem sets in and can lead to suicide attempts or feeling of committing suicide.

Low self-esteem according to Smitha (2022) is when someone lacks confidence about whom he is and what he can do accordingly; this individual fetching incompetent, unloved and inadequate. He is constantly afraid of making mistakes or letting his mates and others down. Having low self-esteem can be detrimental to mental health and can lead to suicide attempts. Kendra (2023) described low self-esteem as having an overall poor sense of self-value, and a poor opinion about one self. Bethany and Corey (2023) refer to low self-esteem as a long term negativity about who you are and how you show up in the world. Low self-esteem also means not holding oneself in high regard. The individual feel shy, anxious, in capable to sees the world and his future in a negative critical condition, always feel sad, low and unmotivated. Such student may be vulnerable to suicide attempts.

Suicide has been regarded as a global and a serious social problem in the world today because its effect is net only on the victim but has a tremendous impact on the family and their economy (Public Mental Health 2022). Sunil, Marjan, Gregory and Aaron (2008) found that low self-esteem is implicated as vulnerability for suicide ideation. Krystal (2021) identified low-self-esteem as a predictor for suicide thoughts anxiety and depressive symptoms. He found that low self-esteem predicted about 80% of suicide attempts. Suicide was found the second leading cause of death among adolescents and teens in the society; low self-esteem is the number one stronger indicator of suicide thoughts and behaviour for boys then anxiety and depression which is number one stronger indicator for girls suicide thoughts and behaviour (Will, 2022). Low self-esteem has been associated with suicide risk depression loneliness and high perceived stigma in the study of Taeyoung-Sung, Secon JU-YEON' HES-JU,KYUNG-YEOL, JOE-MIN IL-SEONAND JIN-SANG (2015) found that low self-esteem was significantly associated with previous suicide attempts even after controlling for depression and self-perceived stygian. Students with low self-esteem have co-morbid depression which is a well-known suicidal risk factor. Also, low self- esteem was significantly associates with history of suicide attempt after controlling for depression (Taeyoung et al 2015). It is against this background that the researchers decided to investigate the relationship that exist among

self-esteem, mental health and suicide attempts of in-school adolescents in Federal Polytechnic Nekede.

Statement of the Problem

Lives in this world is ups and down and to be successful in whatever you do, self-esteem, which is a motivational tool, self-confidence, self-worth and self-image becomes very important. However in most cases in school adolescents experience low self-esteem in their academic pursuit. Many adolescents experience challenges expressing their ideas, lacks self-confidence and self-worth. This may lead to fear of failure in tests, examinations and other academic activities and life endeavor. Adolescents as we all know is a sensitive and critical period of development during which in school adolescents bears heavy school-work pressure while also adapting to significance physical and psychological changes. Adolescence as a transitional period transits adolescents to confusion, conflicts, depression, frustration stress and tension which may lead to low self-esteem.

An adolescent with low self-esteem may experience low opinion about himself have negative thoughts and belief about himself, feel rejected and neglected, lacks confidence of himself, thinks he cannot be useful to himself and others, constantly tells himself that he is not good enough and worth nothing. The above worries may lead to mental health problem and suicide attempts among in-school adolescents in Nekede Polytechnic

Although many scholars must have barged into research on the issues of self-esteem and students, some worked on self-esteem and academic performance or engagement, some worked on low self-esteem and mental health, some on suicide attempts yet the issue of mental health problems and feeling of community suicide continue to militate against the progress of in-school adolescents in Nekede Federal Poly. Thus the present study dived in, to ascertain the relationship that exist among self-esteem mental health and suicide attempts of in-school adolescents in Nekede Poly. The researchers decided to work on the above topic because no literature was found on the self-esteem as it relates to the two concepts mental health and suicide attempts.

Moreover, no literature was found on self-esteem as it relates to in-school adolescents in Nekede Polytechnic. Thus, the gap this study tried to fill. To investigate the relationship that exists among self-esteem, mental health and suicide attempt of in-school adolescents in Nekede Poly.

The main purpose of this study therefore, is to investigate the relationship among self-esteem, mental health and suicide attempts of in-school adolescents of Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Imo State.

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the relationship between the student's level of self-esteem and mental health?
2. What is the relationship between student's levels of self-esteem and suicide attempts?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested for the study

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between students' levels of self-esteem and their mental health.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between students level of self-esteem and suicide attempts.

Method

The study adopted a correlation survey research design which aimed at investigating the relationships between self –esteem, mental health and suicide attempts. Two research questions guided the study, with two hypotheses which was tested. The population of the study comprised all in- school Adolescents of Nekede Federal Poly, giving a total of Nineteen Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty (19,250). Using cluster random sampling technique, a sample of 2800 respondents was drawn.

The instrument used for data collection were, Adolescent Self- esteem and Mental Health Scale (ASEMHRS) and Adolescent Self- esteem and Suicide Rating Scale (ASESRS). Both instruments were developed by the researchers, vetted and validated by 2 experts in Clinical Psychology, one Educational Psychologist and one in Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument consists of three sections: I, II and III. Section I consist of student's demographic data. Section II consists of two clusters: A and B. Both clusters are structured into four points Likert scale of: High Extent (HE) (4-Point); Moderate Extent (ME) (3-Point); Low Extent (LE) (2-Point); and No Extent (NE)(1-Point). The number of items in ASERS and AMHRS are 12 and 14 respectively. ASERS and AMHRS have accepted average of 30 and 35 respectively (Note. Expected Average = product of number of items and the average of four point scale). Consequently any score below the expected average could be regarded as low while those above could be high. The reliability coefficient of internal consistency for ASEMHRS and ASESRS are 0.78 and 0.81 respectively. Using Cronbach Alpha Statistics, Phi-coefficient/correlation coefficient were used to answer the research questions while the Chi-square Statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 levels of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What is the relationship between the students' levels of self-esteem and mental health?

Table 1: Relationship between levels of Self-Esteem and Mental Health

X ² cal.	N	Ø	Decision
1273.52	2800	0.67	Strong Relationship

X²= Chi-square calculated; N= total sample size Ø= Phi-coefficient/ correlation coefficient.

Table showed the Chi—square calculated and the sample size as 1273.52 and 2800 respectively with the correlation coefficient or (or phi-coefficient) of 0.67 hence strong relationship between levels of self-esteem and mental health of students.

Hypothesis One H₀₁: The Students levels mental health does not significantly depend on their levels of self-esteem. There is no significant relationship between students' levels of self-esteem and their mental health ($p < 0.05$).

Table 2: Chi-Square test of Hypothesis One

X ² cal	Df	Sl	X ² tab	Ø	Decision
1273.52	1	0.05	3.84	0.67	H ₀₁ rejected

Table 2 showed the chi-square calculated (X²cal) and chi-square tabulated (X² tab.) as 1273.52 and 3.84 respectively at 1 degree of freedom and 0.05 levels of significance hence, the null hypothesis one is rejected. This means the test of no dependence or relationship is rejected and the alternative accepted which means there is significant strong relationship between students' levels of self-esteem and mental health.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between students' attempt of suicide/ feeling of committing and their level of self-esteem?

Table 3 Relationships between Students' Levels of Self Esteem and Feeling of Committing Suicide/ Attempt of Suicide and Their Level of Self Esteem

X ² cal	N	Ø	Decision
369.25	2800	0.36	Weak relationship

Table 3 showed the Chi-square calculated as 369.25 while sample size (N) and correlation coefficient were shown as 2800 and 0.36 respectively. Owing to the magnitude of correlation coefficient the decision was shown as weak relationship. This implies that there is a weak relationship between levels of students' self-esteem and their attempt of suicide.

Hypothesis Two (H₀₂): The students' attempt of suicide doesn't significantly depend on their levels of self-esteem. Or

There is no significant relationship between Students Levels of self-esteem and their level of suicide attempt.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test of Hypothesis Four

X ² cal	Df	SL	X ² tab	Ø	Decision
369.25	1	0.05	3.84	0.36	H ₀₂ rejected

Table 4 showed that the chi-square calculated (369.25) is greater than the Chi-square tabulated at 1 degree of freedom and 0.05 levels of significance (3.84) hence the null hypothesis two is rejected and its alternative accepted. This means that though the calculated relationship between the two variables is weak, it is still significant.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed a significant strong relationship between students' level of self-esteem and mental health. This finding is in line with Mathew and Lisa (2021) who found that low self-esteem is closely related to mental health because it leads to difficulty in making friends, feelings of worthlessness, frequent negative thoughts, depression, and social withdrawal and anxiety. Also Nguyen, Nobuyuki et al, (2022) found that low self-esteem is associated with receptive mental health consequences and has been linked to 21 different disorders in the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorder.

The study also showed that there was a significant relationship between self-esteem and suicide attempts but the relationship was weak. The reason for this finding could be that though students might commit suicide or think about committing suicide but some extraneous variables that could be implicated with are not related to self-esteem. This is in against the finding of Krystal (2021) who found that low self-esteem predicts about 80% of suicide attempts, also against the finding of Will (2023) who noted that low self-esteem is the number one indicator of suicide thoughts and behaviors. However finding is also in line with Kendra (2023) who noted that self-esteem promotes ones thoughts, emotions, intellectual capabilities and good behavior

Recommendations

Based on the findings and their implications, the following are recommended:

1. Parents should encourage their wards to develop high self-esteem confidence on themselves since levels of self-esteem have strong association with their wards mental health.
2. The school needs to organize seminars for students to enlighten them on the need for one to have self confidence in him/her.
3. Parents should also see to it that they encourage and assist their adolescents to have good self-value for themselves as this will discourage them from attempting suicide
4. The school authority should also organize seminar for students on the relationship between levels of self-esteem and attempt of suicide.

Conclusion

The study has shown that adolescents' levels of self-esteem and mental health have strong association while level of self-esteem and attempt of suicide has weak association hence the need for the stakeholders in education to explore and harness this finding in curbing the tide of mental health and suicide attempt.

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APPENDIX

Instruments for Data Collection

Adolescent Self-Esteem Rating Scale (ASERS)

Study the questions and statements carefully and tick (✓) the option that best describe your response.

Note: High Extent (HE)(4-Point); Moderate Extent (ME)(3-Point);
 Low Extent (LE)(2-Point); and No Extent(NE)(1-Point).

To what extent do you experience each of the following?

S/N	Item Statement	HE	ME	LE	NE
1	Feeling of sadness or being down				
2	Confused thinking or reduced ability to concentrate				
3	Excessive fears or worries				
4	Extreme feeling of guilt				
5	Withdrawal from friends and activities				
6	Problem of sleeping				
7	Significant tiredness or low energy				
8	Detachment from reality delusion, paranoia				
9	Inability to cope with daily problems or stress				
10	Trouble understanding and relating to situations to people				
11	Problems with alcohol or drug				
12	Sex drive changes				
13	Excessive anger, hostility or violence				
14	Suicidal thinking				

Average = $2.5 \times 14 = 35$

HMH= lower than 35

LMH= greater than 35

Note: HMH= High mental health LMH= Low mental health

Adolescent Mental Health Rating Scale (AMHRS)

To what extent are you involved in each of the following?

S/N	Item Statement	HE	ME	LE	NE
1	Saying negative things about yourself				
2	Being critical about yourself				
3	Joking about yourself in a negative way				
4	Focusing on your negatives most often				
5	Ignoring your achievements				
6	Blaming yourself when thing go wrong				
7	Thinking other people are better than you				

8	Thinking you don't deserve to have fun				
9	Avoiding challenges for fear of failing				
10	Being overly upset by disapproval or criticism				
11	Feeling of sad or angry				
12	Feeling of depression or worthlessness				

Average score $2.5 \times 12 = 30$

Student score is > 30 has Low Self-Esteem (LSE)

Student whose score is < 30 has high self-Esteem (HSE)