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Influence of Age on Adolescents' Self Concept among Secondary School Students in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

This study investigated the influence of age on adolescents' self-concept among Secondary School students in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area in Edo State. The sample of the study was 422 students.

This sample comprised of 218 males and 204 female students. Among these 27 students were between the age range of 12 - 14, 307 students were within the age range of 15-17 while 88 students were within the age range of 18 – above. To guide the study, three research questions and their corresponding hypotheses were raised and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and the independent sample student t - test. The results showed that there were differences among the three groups but the differences were not significant. It was therefore recommended that schools should have trained counsellors to enable the adolescent students build their self-concept irrespective of their age differences.

Keywords: Age, Self-Concept and Adolescents

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to the Study

Self-concept, according to Agboola (2015) is the belief one has about him/herself. The mental picture one has about him/herself, a self-perception peculiar or uniquely distinguishing one person from the other. Pastorino & Doyle-Portillo (2013) emphasized that at first one's self-concept is very general and changeable that as we grow older, these self-perceptions become much more organized, detailed, and specific. In the same vein, Weiten, Dunn and Hammer (2012) defined self-concept as a collection of beliefs about one's own nature, unique qualities, and typical behaviour.

There are two types of self-concept, namely; high or positive self-concept and the low or negative self-concept. High self-concept is responsible for self-assertiveness, confidence, the ability to handle tough times and the enablement to make the right decision at the right time while low self-concept is responsible for lack of self-confidence, inferiority complex, inability to handle tough times and inability to make the right choice at the right time (Agboola, 2015).

Experience has shown that there is a relationship between self-concept and the total well-being including the decisions people make, therefore, whether positive or negative, self-concept affects the way the individual thinks and acts towards any issues in life including decision making processes. This is the crucial reason that students should have accurate knowledge about themselves otherwise they may erroneously choose careers that do not match their interest, skills and abilities or make some dangerous decisions since a reasonable number of them exhibit low self-concept (Agboola, 2013). If these adolescents cannot do without making decisions in life and the possibility of exhibiting low self-concept as research has proven, then there is a need for counsellors to search for the factor (s) that may be contributing to the development of their low self-concept.

There are many factors contributing to one's self concept. One of these factors is age. Age affects self-concept since it affects how we perceive ourselves. In childhood, the self-concept tends to be tied to concrete or physical things like looks, items and skill levels. As the children grow, they learn about things like intrinsic (inner) characteristics and psychological differences due to the fact that they now have a larger network of peers and mentors to compare themselves with. Later in life (teenager-adulthood) the self-concept changes into a more nebulous idea that is organized by what is relevant to the individual.

James, Robert & Phil (2011) carried out a study on some antecedents of academic self-concept- a longitudinal study. In this study, the influence of cognitive, achievement, and family background variables on academic self-concept was examined for 435 students participating in a major longitudinal study in New Zealand. These factors were not significantly related to academic self-concept at

ages 9 and 11. In addition, the general emotional status of mothers when their child was 3 years and 5 years old was not significantly related to academic self-concept at ages 9 and 11. Mother's intelligence when the child was 3 years, and mother's expectations for school performance when the child started school at age 5 were not significantly related to academic self-concept. Similarly, cognitive and intellectual functioning at ages 3, 5, 7, and 9 years were not significantly related to academic self-concept at ages 7 and 9 years. Rather, academic self-concept at age 11 appeared to be influenced primarily by reading achievement and academic self-concept at age 9, and academic self-concept at age 9 was influenced primarily by reading achievement at age 7. In the same vein, Martin, Friedrich & Haus (2000) carried out a study on Gender Differences in Self-Concept and Psychological Well-Being in Old Age-A Meta-Analysis and result showed that age influences adolescent self-concept.

It is against this background that this study is set up to find out if age as a factor contributes to the adolescents' development of low self-concept in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State.

2. Statement of the Problem

What an individual thinks about himself is what he is and this mental picture or image of self affects every aspect of one's life, from how he thinks about himself to the way he thinks about or react to life situations. Self-concept can be influenced by some biological and environmental factors that could lead an individual to either develop positive (high) or negative (low) self-concept and one of these factors is age. An individual with a positive self-concept has stronger abilities to patiently endure difficulties and challenges and are also willing to spend more time and efforts to handle tough situations but reverse is the case an adolescent with negative self-concept. Negative or low self-concept generates negative thoughts and influences. When these negative influences and thoughts are prevalent, generated either from within such individual or through others, it adversely affects the way they think and feel about themselves (Agboola, 2015). Over time, this can lead to low self-concept which can reduce the quality of a person's life in many different ways. Unchecked low self-concept may even lead to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, sometimes with tragic results (Egbochuku & Agboola, 2015).

Since study has shown that some adolescents in secondary schools exhibit low self-concept and for the fact that self-concept is changeable and age is dynamic at the space of time, the statement of the problem is: would age have any influence on the self-concept of the adolescents in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State?

2.1. Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of age on the self-concept of the adolescents' in the secondary schools in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State.

To guide the study, three research questions and their corresponding hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

2.2. Research Questions

1. Is there a difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 – 14 and those within 15-17?
2. Is there a difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 15 – 17 and those within 18-above?
3. Is there a difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 – 14 and those within 18-above?

2.3. Hypotheses

- H_{01} : There is no significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 – 14 and those within 15-17
- H_{02} : There is no significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 15 – 17 and those within 18-above
- H_{03} : There is no significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 – 14 and those within 18-above

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The design used for this study was the descriptive survey employing ex-post-facto design, this design was considered suitable because the variables under study were already available and therefore, the researcher needs no manipulation of any variable(s). The independent variable of the study was age. This variable is of three levels which are 12-14 years, 15-17 years and 18years and above.

3.2. Population for the Study

The population of the study consisted of all the public mixed Senior Secondary 11 students in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State with counsellors. There are 5 public mixed schools that have counsellors with 2,761 numbers of students.

3.3. Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of the study consisted of 422 Secondary School II students drawn from three secondary schools randomly selected in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government from the five (5) schools with counsellors in the local government. The participants were 422

comprising of 218 males and 204 female students. Among these 27 students were between the age range of 12 -14, 307 students were within the age range of 15-17 while 88 students were within the age range of 18 – above.

3.4. Research Instrument

The instrument used for this study was questionnaire titled Adolescent Self-Concept Scale. This instrument was made up of two sections. Section A contains the information about the students' bio-data; section B consists of forty (40) items on self-concept on a five-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Not Sure, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The instrument was adapted from Obiunu (2006) and was modified by the researcher.

3.5. Validation of Instrument

Since the instrument was modified, the instrument was re-validated by three experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation. Some items were altered and the corrections suggested were effected and the validity was established.

3.6. Reliability of the Instrument

The test-re-test method was used to establish the reliability of the section B of the instrument and it was found to have a reliability of 0.85 using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

3.7. Method of Data Collection

The researcher and his two research assistants administered the instrument to the sample in their respective schools and the completed questionnaires were collected instantly.

3.8. Data Analysis

Scoring of the data collected follows thus: Positive worded items in the instrument were scored 5.4.3.2.1 on the scale while negative worded items were scored 1.2.3.4.5 respectively. There are forty (40) items on the scale. If a respondent rate himself 5 on every item, the maximum of two hundred scores will be recorded and this represents the highest level of self-concept. Scores of 100 and above represents average to high self-concept while scores below 100 represents low self-concept. The data generated from the study was analyzed to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses formulated for the study using the descriptive statistics of mean and independent sample t- test to determine if there is a significant difference between the self-concepts of students between groups.

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the data generated from the respondents through the Adolescents Self-Concept Scale (ASCS) was conducted and the result was used to answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses raised for the study as shown below:

- Research Question 1: Is there a difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 – 14 and those within 15-17?

Age	N	Mean	Mean Diff.	Std. Deviation
12-14	27	56.74	0.32	13.94
15-17	307	57.06		12.05

Table 1: Descriptive statistics showing the difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 – 14 and those within 15-17

Table 1 above showed that the adolescents within the age range of 12-14 had the self-concept mean score of 56.74 (Std.= 13.94) while those within the age range of 15-17 had the self-concept mean score of 57.06 (Std.=12.05) with a mean difference of 0.32 in favour of the adolescents within the age range of 15-17. This showed that there is a difference between the self-concept of the adolescents between these groups. However, to determine if this difference is significant, an independent sample t-test was carried out to test the hypothesis one as shown in Table 2 below:

- **H₀₁**: There is no significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 – 14 and those within 15-17

Age	N	Mean	Mean diff.df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
12-14	27	36.53	32	332	- 0.130	0.89
15-17	307	74.66				

Table 2: Independent sample t-test showing the significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 – 14 and those within 15-17

Table 2 shows that the observed difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 -14 and those within the age range of 15-17 is not significant at 0.89 ($t = -0.13$; $df = 332$). Since 0.89 is higher than 0.05, the observed difference among the students is not significant. With this, the null hypothesis which says there is no significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 – 14 and those within 15-17 is accepted. This implied that there is no significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents in these groups.

- Research Question 2: Is there a difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 15 – 17 and those within 18-above?

Age	N	Mean	Mean Diff.	Std. Deviation
15-17	307	57.06		12.05
18-above	88	59.62	2.56	11.98

Table 3: Descriptive statistics showing the difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 15 – 17 and those within 18-above

Table 3 above showed that the adolescents within the age range of 15-17 had the self concept mean score of 57.06(Std.=12.05) while those within the age range of 18 - above had the self-concept mean score of 59.62 (Std. =11.98) with a mean difference of 2.56 in favour of the adolescents within the age range of 18- above. This showed that there is a difference between the self-concept of the adolescents between these groups. However, to determine if this difference is significant, an independent sample t-test was carried out to test the hypothesis two as shown in Table 4 below:

- **H₀₂**: There is no significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 15 – 17 and those within 18 - above

Age	N	Mean	Mean diff. df	tSig. (2-tailed)	Decision
15-17	307	74.66			
18-above	88	59.62	2.56 393	- 0.76 0.69	Not Significant

Table 4: Independent sample t-test showing the significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 15 – 17 and those within 18 -above

Table 4 shows that the observed difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 15 -17 and those within the age range of 18-above is not significant at 0.69 ($t = -0.76$; $df = 393$). Since 0.69 is higher than 0.05, the observed difference among the students is not significant. With this, the null hypothesis which says there is no significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 15 – 17 and those within 18-above is accepted. This implied that there is no significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents in these groups.

- Research Question 3: Is there a difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 – 14 and those within 18-above?

Age	N	Mean	Mean Diff.	Std. Deviation
12-14	27	56.74		13.94
18-above	88	59.62	2.88	11.98

Table 5: Descriptive statistics showing the difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 – 14 and those within 18-above

Table 5 above showed that the adolescents within the age range of 12-14 had the self-concept mean score of 56.74(Std.=13.94) while those within the age range of 18 - above had the self-concept mean score of 59.62 (Std. =11.98) with a mean difference of 2.88 in favour of the adolescents within the age range of 18- above. This showed that there is a difference between the self-concept of the adolescents between these groups. However, to determine if this difference is significant, an independent sample t-test was carried out to test the hypothesis three as shown in Table 6 below:

- **H₀₃**: There is no significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 – 14 and those within 18 - above

Age	N	Mean	Mean diff. df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
12-14	27	56.74				
18 -above	88	59.62	2.88113	- 0.540.42	Not Significant	

Table 6: Independent sample t-test showing the significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 – 14 and those within 18 -above

Table 6 shows that the observed difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 -14 and those within the age range of 18-above is not significant at 0.42 ($t = -0.54$; $df = 113$). Since 0.42 is higher than 0.05, the observed difference among the students is not significant. With this, the null hypothesis which says there is no significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents within the age range of 12 – 14 and those within 18-above is accepted. This implied that there is no significant difference between the self-concept of the adolescents in these groups.

5. Discussion

In this study, it was discovered that there is no significant difference between the self-concept scores among students within the age range of 12-14 when compared with those within the age range of 15 -17 as addressed by hypothesis one. This could be as a result of the fact these adolescents share the same environment and similar experiences. This finding is in disagreement with the finding of Martin, Friedrich, and Haus (2000) and James, Robert and Phil (2011) who found out that age influences adolescent's self-concept. In the same vein, the second finding in this study revealed that there is no significant difference between the self-concept scores among students within the age range of 15-17 when compared with those within the age range of 18 -above as addressed by hypothesis two. The same result was found between the age range of 12-14 and those within 18 and above. This could also be as a result of the fact these adolescents share the same environment and similar experiences. This finding is in disagreement with the finding of Martin, Friedrich, and Haus (2000) and James, Robert and Phil (2011) who found out that age influences adolescent's self-concept.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the influence of age on adolescent's self-concept in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State. It is found out that there is no significant difference between the self-concept scores of students in 12-14, 15-17 and those within 18 and above.

7. Recommendation

Based on the above finding, it is therefore recommended that:

a. All secondary schools in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State should have appropriate numbers of trained counsellors in their schools to give valid and usable counsels to the adolescents in the schools so as to enable develop high self-concept irrespective of their age differences.

8. References

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