

## ADOLESCENTS SELF ESTEEM AND ITS EFFECT ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Quinter Migunde, Lucas Othuon and Catherine Mbagaya

Maseno University, Department of Educational Psychology, P.O. BOX 333, Maseno

---

**ABSTRACT:** *The purpose of this study was to establish the self esteem of adolescents in Kisumu Municipality, Kenya and to determine the relationship between self esteem and career variables. A sample of 369 secondary school students were surveyed on career self esteem, career maturity and career locus of control. The current study found that female students scored significantly higher on self esteem and internal locus of control than male students and that male students scored significantly higher on external locus of control. Self esteem was found to be positively correlated to career maturity and internal locus of control and negatively correlated to external locus of control. Using linear regression analyses, self esteem was found to be a significant predictor of career maturity, internal locus of control and external locus of control. Self esteem only accounted for 2% of variance in career maturity, internal locus of control and external locus of control. The results demonstrate that self esteem has a significant role to play in adolescents' career development.*

**KEYWORDS:** Self Esteem, Adolescents, Career Maturity, Locus of Control, Gender

---

### INTRODUCTION

Self esteem has been defined differently by different psychologists. Schwalbe & Staples, (1991) defined self esteem as the feeling an individual has about him or herself that affect how he or she views himself/herself. Mruk(2006) on the other hand has defined self esteem in four different ways ; first as an attitude which with involves positive or negative cognitive, behavioral and emotional reactions. The second definition is based on discrepancy which involves measuring the difference between what an individual sees as the ideal self and their perceived self. In this case, the closer the two perceptions are the higher the self esteem is thought to be. The third definition is based on a psychological response an individual holds towards him or herself. Lastly Mruk views self esteem as a function of personality.

According to Neff (2011), psychologists' interest in self esteem has grown over the years. This is because self esteem is associated with social, emotional, behavioral and mental development. McLeod (2012) proposes that self esteem should be viewed as a continuum and that it can be high, medium or low. Mcleod goes ahead to explain that both high and low self esteem can be harmful to an individual. High self esteem has been associated with positive outcomes (Neff, 2011), growth and improvement (Mcleod, 2012). Low self esteem has been associated with a number of negative psychological, physical, emotional and social consequences that may influence adolescents' development and the transition to adulthood (Wang and Veugelers, 2008). These include depression (Silverstone & Salsali, 2003; Mann et al, 2004), focus on making mistakes (Mcleod, 2012), exaggerating events as being negative, social anxiety, low confidence, pessimism (Rosenberg & Owen, 2001), poor physical health (Trnesniewskiet al (2006)), antisocial behavior, and suicidal attempts (Orth, Robins & Robert, 2008). It has also been associated with eating disorders, violet behavior, early sexual activities especially in girls, substance abuse and poor mental health (Mann et al, 2004).

### **Development of self esteem**

Several processes have been identified in the encyclopedia of marriage and family, (2003) as important in self esteem development. Among them is reflected appraisals which suggest that we tend to evaluate ourselves as we think significant others in our lives see and evaluate us. A second process which is considered important in self esteem development is social comparison which involves individuals assessing their abilities and virtues by comparing themselves with others. A third process is self attribution which involves making inferences about ourselves from direct observation of our behaviors and its consequences. Elmas (2001) describes different factors that may affect self esteem. This include success, failures, rejection, acceptance and appearance.

Researchers have found self esteem to be considerably high in childhood and is mainly associated with physical punishment and withholding of love and affection by parents (McLeod, 2012). During childhood, children with low self esteem develop undesirable behaviours such as bullying and avoiding to engage in activities for fear of failure. Self esteem begins to decline during adolescence and is attributed to significant changes that take place during the transition from childhood to adolescence such as puberty, formation of relationships (Bos et al, 2006), body image (McLeod, 2012) and peer acceptance (Russel-Mayhew, Authur & Ewashen, 2007). Self esteem then rises gradually throughout adulthood and then declines in old age (Robins & Trzesmewski, 2005).

Research has shown that gender differences in self esteem starts to emerge during adolescence. During this stage, girls experience sharper decline than boys in their levels of self esteem (Rhodes et al 2004; Robin et al 2002; Young & Mroczek, 2003). Other studies have found no significant gender differences in adolescents self esteem scores (Donnellan et al , 2007). Research on the stability of self esteem has revealed that the stability of self esteem is low during childhood and early adolescence but becomes more stable throughout adolescence (Trnesniewski, Donnellan & Robins, 2003)

### **Self esteem and career development**

Career development refers to the life long process of developing work values , vocational identity and exploring different career opportunities and work (Dhillon & Kaur, 2005). Several researchers subscribe to the idea that a persons self esteem is related to their career development. From Super's theory, self definition may be the most significant vocational development task for students. As a psychological construct, self esteem has been studied with a number of career related variables. According to Patton, Bartum and Creed (2004), students who score high in self esteem are better equipped to manage the adaptational process of developing career interests and making career related decisions. Self esteem has been found to be positively correlated to career maturity, work commitment, work values, career certainty, career decision making self efficacy (Creed & Patton, 2003), vocational identity (Dhillon and Kaur , 2005; Santos, 2003), career choice satisfaction (Stanford, 1984) and negatively correlated to career indecision ((Starica, 2012))

### **Present study**

The present study aims to determine adolescents self esteem and its effect on career maturity and career locus of control. The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To determine gender differences in self esteem, career maturity and career locus of control.
2. To determine the relationship between self esteem and career maturity and between self esteem and career locus of control.
3. To determine gender differences in the relationship between self esteem and career maturity and between self esteem and career locus of control.

## METHOD

The study was carried out in secondary schools in Kisumu Municipality Kenya. The sample for the study consisted of 369 secondary school students from forms one to form four. The sample consisted of 162 male and 196 female students 11 of the respondents did not indicate their gender. The age of participants ranged from 13 to 24 years. The mean age of the participants was 16.5. Year one students represented 25.4%, year two represented 24.3%, year three represented 31.9% and year four students represented 17.0% of the total sample.

### Instruments

*Demographic Questionnaire.* Demographic questionnaire was used to gather basic information about the students such as age, gender, type of school, and year in school.

*Career Maturity.* Career Maturity Inventory – Adaptability form (CMI; Savickas & Porfeli, 2011) readiness subscale was used to measure the career maturity of the students. The readiness subscale which has a total of 18 items measuring concern, curiosity and confidence was measured on a 5-point likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree). Sample items include: ‘I am not going to choose a career until I am out of school’ and ‘I don’t know what subjects to take in school’. Savickas and Porfeli (2011) reported an alpha coefficient of .86. The reliability coefficient for the current study was .71.

*Self Esteem.* The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSE: Rosenberg, 1965) was employed to assess the students’ self-worth. The scale consists of 10 items with 5 of the items positively oriented and the other five negatively oriented. Internal consistency reliability have been reported as follows: Creed Patton and Bartum (2004) .85, and Santos and Ferreira (2012) .89. The reliability coefficient for the current study was .77.

*Career Locus of Control.* The Career Locus of control Scale (CLCS; Millar & Shevlin, 2007) was used to measure career locus of control of the respondents. The scale consists of 20 items measuring both internal and external locus of control. The items were measured on a 5-point likert scale. Santos and Ferreira (2012) reported an internal consistency coefficient of .69. The reliability coefficient for the current study was .77.

## RESULTS

### *Gender, self esteem, career maturity and career locus of control*

There were significant gender differences in the self esteem scale. Female students scored significantly higher than males in self esteem ( $p < .05$ ). No significant gender differences were noted on career maturity and in all the subscales of career maturity. Male students reported

significantly higher scores on external locus of control and in two of the subscales of external locus of control; helplessness and powerful others. Females on the other hand received significantly higher scores on the internal locus of control scale. The results are presented in Table 1.

*Intercorrelations between self esteem, career maturity, internal locus of control, external locus of control, age and year in school*

Table 2 presents bivariate correlation results among all dependent and independent variables and the demographic variable of age and year in school for the total sample. Significant positive correlations were observed between self esteem and career maturity and between self esteem and confidence which is a subscale of career maturity. There were however non-significant correlations between self esteem and the subscales of curiosity and concern.

There was also a significant positive correlation between self esteem and internal locus of control. Self esteem was significantly negatively correlated to external locus of control, helplessness and powerful others. The relationship between self esteem and luck was however non-significant.

Year in school was significantly positively correlated to career maturity, concern and confidence. Year in school was however significantly negatively correlated to powerful others. Age on the other hand was not significantly correlated to any of the variables under study for the total sample.

*Intercorrelations between self esteem, career maturity, internal locus of control, external locus of control, age and year in school by gender*

Summary data and bivariate correlations among independent and dependent variables are presented in Table 3. For females, there were no significant relationships between self esteem and all the variables under study. For males, self esteem was significantly and positively associated with career maturity and concern and negatively associated with external locus of control and all the subscales of external locus of control which include luck helplessness and powerful others.

*Self esteem as a predictor of career maturity and career locus of control*

Linear regression analyses were conducted to test the hypothesis in relation to predicting career maturity and career locus of control. Career maturity, external locus of control and internal locus of control were entered as the dependent variables and self esteem was entered as the independent variable. The summary data are presented in Table 2.

The results indicate significant model fit for all the three models. Self esteem accounted for 2% of the variance in career maturity ( $r^2=.02$ ,  $F= 7.07$ ,  $p<05$ ), 2% variance in internal locus of control ( $r^2=.02$ ,  $F= 7.08$ ,  $p<05$ ) and 2% variance in external locus of control ( $r^2=.02$ ,  $F= 8.37$ ,  $p<05$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The results of the present study show that female students reported higher self esteem than did male students. These results differ from results reported by Santos (2003), Armenta and Hunt (2009), Lynch et al (2001) and Creed, Patton & Bartum (2004), who found no statistically significant difference in the scores of male and female students on the self esteem scale. The above results however concur with Bean and Northrup (2009) who found significant gender difference for males and females on the self esteem scores. Contrary to previous research which have reported similar self esteem in both males and females or high self esteem in males the current study found that female students possess high self-esteem compared to the male students. Tamini and Valibeygi (2011) reports that self-esteem is influenced by biological, cognitive, social and environmental factors. It is likely that female students in Kisumu Municipality have more positive assessment in terms of their physical characteristics and their intellectual abilities. Another possible explanation is that the empowerment of the girl child has made adolescent girls feel good about themselves hence leading to an increase in their self-esteem.

Female students reported significantly higher scores on the internal locus of control scale. These results are similar to those reported by Ross and Nirowsky (2002) who also found that females possess significantly high internal locus of control. These results suggest that gender has a significant effect on students ILoC. In the current study, females had higher beliefs that their career outcomes were as a result of their own individual effort than their male counterparts. Male students on the other hand were more likely to believe that their career outcomes are more dependent on external forces than did the female students. According to Stocks, April and Lynton (2012), over the years, women have exhibited more external locus of control due to their historical gender roles however, the present results suggest otherwise. It is likely that females have been empowered and now believe that it is important to be well prepared for the job market.

There were significant positive correlations between self esteem and career maturity and between self esteem and the subscale of confidence implying that a self esteem increases career maturity also increases especially confidence in making age appropriate career decisions. Significant positive correlations were also observed between self esteem and internal locus of control implying that as self esteem increases, students' belief that their career outcomes are a result of their own personal efforts also increases.

Self esteem was found to be negatively correlated to external locus of control implying that a self esteem increases, belief that career outcomes are dependent on external forces decreases from the results, it is evident that as self esteem increases students level of helplessness in making career decisions decreases and the belief that their career outcomes are dependent on powerful others in the society also decreases. Similar results were noted for the male sample.

It is important to note that; self esteem was not significantly correlated to any of the variables under study for the female sample. These results are consistent with Patton, Bartum and Creed (2004) who reported self esteem for males as performing a positive and contributory role to career development.

Self esteem emerged as a predictor for career maturity, internal locus of control and external locus of control however, it accounted for a very small portion (2%) of variance for all the

variables under study.. The present results are in agreement with Janeiro (2010) who reported that the association between self esteem and career maturity are normally of a low magnitude.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Both present and previous researches have shown that self esteem is important in adolescents development. As a result, parents and teacher should help foster self esteem development in adolescents. Given that self esteem only accounted for a small variance in the career variables under study research should be carried out to determine whether self esteem can also function as an outcome variable.

## REFERENCES

- Armenta, B. E., & Hunt, J. S. (2009). Responding to societal devaluation: effects of perceived personal and group discrimination on the ethnic group identification and personal self-esteem of Latino/Latina adolescents. *Process and Intergroup Relations* 12, 33-39.
- Bean, R. A., & Northrup, J. C. (2009). Parental psychological control, psychological autonomy and acceptance as predictors of self esteem in Latino adolescents. *Journal of Family Issues* 30, 1486-1504.
- Bos, E. R., Muris, P., Mulkens, S., & Sohaalma, H. (2006). Changing self esteem in children and adolescents: a road map for future interventions. *Netherlands Journal of Psychology* 62, 26-33.
- Creed, P. A. & Patton, W. (2003). Difference in career attitudes and career knowledge for high school students with and without paid work experience. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 3, 31 – 33.
- Creed, P. A., Patton, W., & Bartrum, D. (2004). Internal and external barriers, cognitive style and the career development variables of focus and indecision. *Journal of Career Development*, 30, 277-294.
- Donnellan, M. B., Trzesniewski, K. H., Conger, K.J., & Conger, D.D. (2007). A three wave longitudinal study of self evaluations during young adulthood. *Journal of Research in Personality* 41, 453-472.
- Dhillon, U., & Kaur, R. (2005). Career maturity of school children. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 31, 71-76.
- Elmas, N. (2001). The costs and causes of low self worth. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. York Publishing Services l.t.d.
- Galambos, N.S. Barker, E.F., & Krahn, H.J. (2006). Depression, self esteem and danger in emerging adulthood: seven year trajectory. *Developmental Psychology* 42, 350-365.
- Janairo, I.N. (2010). Motivational dynamics in the development of career attitudes among adolescents. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 76, 170-177.
- Larson, R. W. (2000). Towards a psychology of positive youth development. *American Psychologist* 55, 170-183.
- Lynch, M., Barbara, J., Myers, W. K., & Christopher, K. (2001). Adolescents self-esteem and gender: exploring relations to sexual harassment, body image, media influence and emotional expression. *Journal of Youth and Adolescents* 30, 225-244.
- Mann, M. Hosman, C.M. Schaalma, H. P. (2004). Self esteem in a broad spectrum approach for mental health promotion. *Health Educ. Res.* 19, 357-372.

- McLeod, S. A. (2012). Low self esteem. Retrieved from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/self-esteem.html>
- Millar, R., & Shevlin, M. (2007). The development and factor structure of a career locus of control scale for use with school pupils. *Journal of Career Development, 33*, 224-249.
- Mruk, C. J. (2006). Self esteem research, theory and practice: towards a positive psychology of self esteem. New York: Springer.
- Neff, D.K. (2011). Self comparison, self esteem and well being. *Social and Personality Psychology 5*, 1-12.
- Orth, U., Robins, R.W., & Roberts, B. W. (2008). Low self esteem prospectively predicts depression in adolescence and young adulthood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 98*, 645-658.
- Patton, W., Bartum, D.A., & Creed, P.A. (2004). Gender differences for optimism, self esteem, expectations and goals in predicting career planning and exploration in adolescence. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance 4*, 193-209.
- Rhodes, J., Roffman, J., Reddy, R., & Fredriksen, K. (2004). Changes in self esteem during middle school years: a latent growth curve study of individual and contextual influences. *Journal of School Psychology 42*, 242-261.
- Robins, R.W. Trzesniewski, K. H. (2005). Self esteem development across the life span. *Current Directions in Psychological Science 14*, 158-162.
- Robins, R.W. Trzesniewski, K. H., Tracy, J. L., Jostling, S. D. & Potter, J. (2002). Global self esteem across the life span. *Psychology and Aging 17*, 423-434.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Russel-Mayhews, S., Authur, N., & Ewasten, C. (2007). Eating disorders. *The Journal of Treatment and Prevention 15*, 159-181.
- Santos, P. J., & Ferreira, A. J. (2012). Career decision status among Portuguese secondary school students: A cluster analytic approach. *Journal of Career Assessment, 20*, 166-181.
- Santos, P.J. (2003). Goal instability, self-esteem and vocational identity of high school Portuguese students. *Anallse Pslcologia 2*, 229-238.
- Savickas, M. L., & Porfeli, E. J. (2011). revision of the career maturity inventory: The adaptability form. *Journal of Career Assessment, 19*, 355-374.
- Schwab, M.L. & Staples, C.L. (1991). Gender differences in sources of self esteem. *Social Psychology Quartely 54*, 158-168.
- Spencer, J.M., Zimmet, G. D., & Orr, D.P. (2002). Self esteem as a predictor of initiation of coitus in early adolescence. *Pediatrics 109*, 581-584.
- Stanford, F. P. (1984). Relation of attitude towards women's roles and occupational behavior due to women's self esteem. *Journal of Counseling Psychology 31*, 332-338.
- Starica, E. C. (2012). Predictors of career indecision in adolescents. *Social and Behavioral Sciences 33*, 168-172.
- Tamini, K. B., & Valibeygi, R. (2011). The impact of age, gender and academic branch on self-esteem of students. *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research 1*, 1065-1069.
- Trzesniewski, K.H., Donnelan, M.B., & Robbins, R.W. (2003). Stability of self esteem across the life span. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 84*, 205-220.
- Trzesniewski, K.H., Donnelan, M.B., Moffit, T.E., Robbins, R.W., Poulton, R., & Caspi, A. (2006). Low self esteem during adolescence predicting poor health, criminal behaviour and limited economic prospects during adulthood. *Developmental Psychology 42*, 381-390.

Wang, F., Veugelers, P.J. (2008). Self esteem and cognitive development in the error of childhood obesity epidemic. *Obes. Rev.* 9, 615-623.

Young, F. J. & Mroczek, D.K. (2003). Predicting intra individual self-concept trajectory during adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence* 26, 586-600.

## APPENDICES

**Table 1: Summary Data for Gender, Self Esteem, Career Maturity and Career Locus of control**

	<i>Male</i>			<i>Female</i>			<i>t</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
<b>Self Esteem</b>	162	21.67	5.10	196	22.96	5.25	-2.34*
Concern	162	15.86	2.71	196	15.88	3.28	-.05
Curiosity	162	19.90	4.45	196	19.70	4.74	-.40
Confidence	162	19.47	4.52	196	18.74	4.80	1.48
<b>Career Maturity</b>	162	61.04	8.75	196	59.72	9.78	1.34
Luck	162	14.57	4.52	196	13.95	4.60	1.27
Helplessness	162	11.66	4.40	196	10.01	4.15	3.65**
Powerful Others	162	11.67	4.24	196	10.27	4.37	3.06**
<b>External Locus of control</b>	162	37.90	10.53	196	34.23	10.34	3.31**
<b>Internal Locus of Control</b>	162	20.36	4.15	196	21.73	3.28	-3.40**

**Table 2: Person's Product- Moment Correlation Matrix (2-tail) among Dependent Variables, Independent Variable, Age and Year in School for the Total Sample N= 369**

	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>
<b>1</b> SE	1											
<b>2</b> Concern	.07	1										
<b>3</b> Curiosity	.09	.24**	1									
<b>4</b> Confidence	.15**	.28**	.42**	1								
<b>5</b> CM	.14**	.58**	.71**	.82**	1							
<b>6</b> Luck	-.04	-	-	-	-	1						
		.16**	.12**	.15**	.23**		1					
<b>7</b> Helplessness	-	-	-	-	-	.35**	1					
	.15**	.28**	.15**	.20**	.28**			1				
<b>8</b> Powerful Others	-	-	-.11*	-	-	.38**	.65**	1				
	.18**	.27**	-	.20**	.25**				1			
<b>9</b> ELoC	-	-	-	-	-	.73**	.82**	.84**	1			
	.15**	.29**	.16**	.23**	.32**					1		
<b>10</b> ILoC	.14**	.12**	.01	.03	.02	.09	-	-	-	-	1	
							.29**	.27**	.19**			1
<b>11</b> Age	-.06	-.02	-.02	.02	-.00	.10	.07	-.03	.06	.07	1	
<b>12</b> Year in School	-.05	.12*	.05	.10*	.12*	-.10	-.04	-.11*	-.10	.05	.66**	1

Key: ILoC = Internal Locus of Control, ELoC = External Locus of Control, SE= Self Esteem, and CM = Career Maturity

\* $p < .05$ .      \*\* $p < .01$ .



**Table 3: Person’s Product- Moment Correlation Matrix (2-tail) among Dependent Variables, Independent Variable, Age and Year in School for Male And Female Participants**

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	SE	1	.08	.11	.26*	.23*	-.12	-	-	-	.09	.05	.04
					*	*		.21*	.24*	.23*			
								*	*	*			
2	Concern	.0	1	.19*	.27*	.56*	-.10	-	-	-	.16*	-.10	.02
		6			*	*		.29*	.27*	.27*			
								*	*	*			
3	Curiosity	.0	.29*	1	.44*	.71*	-.15	-	-.15	-	-.00	.06	.07
		6	*		*	*		.22*		.22*			
								*		*			
4	Confidence	.0	.29*	.39*	1	.82*	-	-	-	-	.06	.03	.11
		5	*	*		*	.16*	.28*	.19*	.26*			
										*			
5	CM	.0	.61*	.70*	.81*	1	-	-	-	-	.04	-.01	.09
		7	*	*	*		.23*	.35*	.26*	.35*			
							*	*	*	*			
6	Luck	.0	-	-.09	-	-	1	.38*	.38*	.74*	.12	.05	-.02
		2	.18*		.14*	.23*		*	*	*			
						*							
7	Helplessness	-	-	-.10	-	-	.33*	1	.34*	.84*	-	.05	-.01
		.0	.28*		.17*	.25*	*		*	*	.20*		
		9	*		*	*					*		
8	Powerful Others	-	-	-.07	-	-	.34*	.65*	1	.83*	-	-.13	-.10
		.0	.28*		.20*	.23*	*	*		*	.28*		
		9	*		*	*					*		
9	ELoC	-	-	.11	-	-	.72*	.82*	.65*	1	-.15	-.01	-.05
		.0	.31*		.21*	.30*	*	*	*				
		6	*		*	*							
10	ILoC	.1	.09	.02	.03	.02	.08	-	-	-	1	.19*	.16
		3						.34*	.24*	.20*			
								*	*	*			
11	Age	-	.04	-.06	.01	.02	.10	.01	-.06	.02	-.02	1	.68*
		.1											*
		4											
12	Year In School	-	.17*	.03	.08	.13	-.11	-.07	-.10	-.12	-.03	.71*	1
		.0										*	
		9											

Key: Coefficients above the diagonal are for males and below the diagonal are for females. ILoC = Internal Locus of Control, ELoC = External Locus of Control, SE= Self Esteem, and CM = Career Maturity

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01