

The Effects of Parenting on the Self-Esteem of Adolescents: A study at Labadi Presbyterian Secondary School (Ghana)

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of parenting on self-esteem among adolescents of Labadi Presbyterian Secondary School. A total number of 165 participants of both sexes with their ages ranging from 15 -20 years were selected randomly from the students in the school using a stratified sampling technique. The cross sectional survey design was used for the study. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used to collect the data on the self esteem of the students. The results showed that the self-esteem of adolescents living with both parents was more than those living with single parents. Again male adolescents had more self esteem than the female ones. There was no relationship between age and self-esteem. The results gathered made clear that the availability of both parents is related to the self-esteem of their adolescents.

Keywords: Self-esteem, single parent, high self esteem, Labadi Secondary School, parenting

Introduction

In the mid-1960s, Rosenberg (1965) defined self-esteem as an evaluation and of one's worth and it is an indicator of psychological well-being of one. Self-esteem is considered an important indicator of the success with which one handles the developmental period of adolescence (Bulanda & Majumdar 2009)..

The self esteem is acquired primarily through contact with others. When we interact with significant people in our environment –parents, brothers, sisters, friends and teachers we begin to develop a concept of self that is largely based on the evaluations of others (Ryckman, 2008). Most often we find little time to interact with such significant people especially parents due to demands of work, with parents leaving home very early and coming back late. Parental divorce is one such disruptive event (Krider, 2002) and children's self-esteem may be at risk following the divorce of their parents (Bynum & Durm, 1996). As we develop, parents play a significant role in our life as a whole. In this research, the researchers aimed at discovering whether our self-esteem is dependent on whether we are living with both parents or with single parents.

According to Monama (2011) in 2007 about 52 percent of African urban parents are single. Parents used to stay longer in marriage in the interest of their children's welfare even if they faced marital problems. But now so many couples end their marriage even for a simple reason and they become single parents. No matter how the single parent deals with this challenge, the repercussions are far weightier as compared to children of parents living together (Gardner 2008). Children of divorced parents have also reported feelings of loneliness and rejection (Krider 2002), incompetence (Krider 2002), and insecurity (Krider 2002). Additionally, previous studies have shown that parental divorce significantly affects children's levels of self-esteem (Krider 2002).

Since we know that parents play a key role in the development of self-esteem, it is not surprising that a disruption in the parental relationship would have an effect on that development. After divorce, a major change in parenting takes place simply as a result of the absence of the non-custodial parent. Mruk in 1995 (Krider 2002) found that children with parents who are absent frequently or for long periods of time display lower levels of self-esteem. Children often view this parental absence as a sort of rejection and in turn question their worth (Krider 2002). This study therefore sought to discover whether absence or presence of parents has an influence on the self-esteem of a Ghanaian adolescent.

Objectives of the study

This study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine whether adolescents from intact families will have a high self-esteem than children from single parented homes.
2. To determine the effect of gender of the adolescents on the self esteem on single parenting
3. To examine the relationship between age and self- esteem.

Significance of the study

The relevance of this study was to determine whether self-esteem is dependent on the adolescents living with any of the parent be it the mother or the father or on both parents. This study will help us understand whether different levels of self-esteem will exist between male and female adolescents from single parent families and those from intact families. We will better understand after completion of this study whether is true that children of single parents have a low self-esteem than children from intact families.

Literature Review

There have been some studies related to the researchers work on parenting and self-esteem. In a recent work done by Hetherington (2003), children in divorced and remarried families show an increased risk for internalizing problems, including higher levels of depression and anxiety, and lower levels of self-esteem compared to children in non-divorced families. A study by Elfhag, Tynelius and Rasmussen et al. (2010) also found out that children have lower self-esteem living with a single parent than those raised by two parents. In 1991 Amato and Keith examined the 92 studies involving 13,000 children ranging from preschool to young adulthood and the overall result of this analysis was that children from divorced families are on "average" somewhat worse off than children who have lived in intact families. These children have more difficulty in school, more behavior problems, more negative self-concepts, more problems with peers, and more trouble getting along with their parents. A more recent update of the findings indicates that this pattern continues in more recent research (Amato, 2001).

Naderi et.al (2009) who studied the relationship between achievement of motivation, self-esteem and gender among high school of students found that there is significant relationship between self-esteem and gender. It was found out that male adolescents had higher self-esteem than female adolescents.

Mruk in 1995 also found that children with parents who are absent frequently or for long periods of time display lower levels of self-esteem. Krider (2002) found out that two (2)- three (3) years after the divorce, children were two (2) to four (4) times more likely to be seriously disturbed emotionally and behaviorally than children of intact families. In another study, it was found out that two years after the divorce, children displayed lower levels of social and peer functioning as well as lower self-esteem than they did immediately following the divorce (Krider 2002).

Several longitudinal studies found that self-esteem levels remained constant with increased age, and therefore increased age was not a significant predictor of self-esteem. Other longitudinal research indicated a gradual increase in self-esteem across adolescence (Connor et al. 2004). Conversely, other studies have shown that self-esteem decreased over time during adolescence (Connor et al. 2004). Robins and colleagues in 2002 reported that self-esteem is highest during childhood, drops significantly during adolescence, and then increases again into adulthood.

Further research has shown that children with fathers present do better in school, are less prone to violence, and have better mental health such as self-esteem and self-confidence (Kevorkian 2010). Boys without fathers are less likely to finish high school, more likely to suffer emotionally and economically, and are more likely to have difficulty forming relationships (Passley et al. 2006). Clark-Stewart and Hayward (1996) found that both boys and girls have higher self-esteem if they live with their fathers after a divorce, with greater effect in boys.

Statement of Hypotheses

For the purpose of this study, the following hypotheses were investigated:

1. Adolescents with both parents are more likely to have a high self-esteem than adolescents from a single parented home.
2. Male adolescents are more likely to have high self-esteem than female adolescents of Labadi Presbyterian Secondary School.

3. There will be a positive significant relationship between age and self-esteem.

Methodology

Research Setting

The research was conducted at Labadi Presbyterian Senior High School at Accra. It's a mixed school and the adolescent who are the main target for this study can be found in such population. The school currently has a population of eight hundred and ninety eight students(898), with males being four hundred and sixty eight (468) and females being four hundred and three (430). This setting was most appropriate because it represents a place where most adolescents live with either both or single parents.

Sample Size and Technique

A total number of one hundred and sixty five (165) participants of both sexes with their ages ranging from fifteen (15) to twenty (20) were selected randomly from the students in the school using a stratified sampling technique.

Design and Instrument

The cross sectional survey design was used for the study. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used to collect the data on the self esteem of the students. It has a high reliability ranging from .82 to .88.

Results

The first hypothesis stated that adolescents living with both parents are more likely to have high self-esteem than adolescents living with single parents. The One –way ANOVA was used in analyzing this hypothesis because the mean scores of self-esteem of the three levels of the forms of parenting being single mother, single father and both parents were compared. The results are tabulated below:

Table 1:A summary of One-way ANOVA, Means and SD of scores of adolescents.

Family Type	N	Mean	SD	df	F	p
Single Mother	68	19.18	3.67	2, 157	8.48	.00
Single Father	24	18.33	4.43			
Both Parents	68	21.46	3.91			

From table 1 above, it can be seen that there is a significant difference in the self-esteem of the adolescents in the three (3) levels. [$F(2,157)=8.48, p=.00$, one tailed]. Post hoc comparisons were done using LSD and this indicated that adolescents of single mother ($M=19.18, SD=3.67$), single father ($M=18.33, SD=4.43$) had less self esteem than those from both parents ($M=21.46, SD=3.91$). Therefore the researchers' hypothesis that children from both parents have a high self-esteem than children from single parented homes was supported or retained.

The second hypothesis stated that male adolescents are more likely to have a high self-esteem than female adolescents. The Independent t test was used in analyzing the mean scores of self-esteem among male and female adolescents.

The results can be seen below:

Table 2: A summary of the means, SD, and t test of the scores of the adolescents.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	P
Males	81	20.56	4.17	158	1.70	.04
Females	79	19.47	3.92			

The above results shows that the mean differences between males ($M=20.56$, $SD=4.17$) and females ($M=19.47$, $SD=3.92$) in self-esteem was found to be statistically significant. Thus ($t=1.70$, $df=158$, $p=.05$, one tailed). The hypothesis stating that males are more likely to have a high self-esteem than females has been retained.

The last hypothesis was that there would be a positive significant relationship between age and self-esteem among adolescents of Labadi School. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was employed in analyzing this hypothesis because the researcher wanted to measure the relationship between the two (2) variables thus age and self-esteem. The results can be seen below:

Table 3: A summary of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r), Means and SD between Age and Self-esteem

	N	Mean	SD	r	p
Age	160	17.46	1.71	.04	.29
Self-Esteem	160	20.02	4.07		

The relationship between age and self-esteem was investigated using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. There was no significant correlation between age and self-esteem. It was a weak correlation between the two variables thus age and self-esteem [$r=.04$, $n=160$, $p<.29$]. The hypothesis was not supported, thus there is no positive significant relationship between age and self-esteem.

Discussion

This study is aimed at determining the effect of adolescents who stay with both parents and those who stay with single parents on their self-esteem at Labadi Presbyterian Secondary School. The first hypothesis was adolescents who stay with both parents are more likely to have a high self-esteem than those from single parented homes.

From the statistical analysis, it was observed that there was a significant difference between adolescents from both parents and those from single homes. It was noticed that the adolescents living with both parents have higher self-esteem than those living with single parents. The findings of this study is consistent with the work of Hetherington (2003) which stated that children in divorced and remarried families show an increased risk for internalizing problems including higher levels of depression and anxiety and lower levels of self-esteem compared to children in non-divorced families. In a study in the journal of psychology by Rasmussen et al. (2010) showed that children living with a single parent have a low self-esteem than those raised by two (2) parents. In another study by Amato and Keith (1991), they examined the results of 92 studies involving 13,000 children ranging from preschool to young adulthood to determine what the overall results indicated. The overall result of this analysis was that children from divorced families are on "average" somewhat worse off than children who have lived in intact families. These children have more difficulty in school, more behavior problems, more negative self-concepts, more problems with peers, and more trouble getting along with their parents. This implies that they having a negative self-concept about themselves can be said to mean that they have a low self-esteem than those from intact homes. Thus the availability of both parents is associated with high self-esteem because they are available to provide support and guidance to the adolescents and this builds their self-esteem.

The second hypothesis was that male adolescents are more likely to have high self-esteem than female adolescents. From the statistical analysis there was a difference between the mean scores of males and females self-esteem. The difference was that males have a high self-esteem than females. This is because boys and girls respond differently to the separation, death and divorce of their parents and this affects their self-esteem. Thus the hypothesis was confirmed and is in support of a study conducted by James (2009) where ninety four (94) participants including thirty two (32) males and sixty two (62) females and ranging in age from fourteen (14) to eighteen (18) who filled out a demographic questionnaire and three surveys: the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, a Religiosity Scale, and the Perceived Social Support Family Scale found out that male adolescents had higher self-esteem than female adolescents. The finding of this study was however contrary to a study done by Krider (2002) on the relationship of parental divorce during childhood and self-esteem of young adult offspring. It was realized after the study that there was no difference between the self-esteem of males and females. The context in which the study was carried out was

different and this may account for the differences in self-esteem. Adolescents males in Labadi School based on the findings of this study have a high self-esteem than females.

Finally, the third hypothesis that, there will be a positive significant relationship between ones age and self-esteem was not confirmed by the results of the statistical analysis. The results showed that there was no significant correlation between age and self-esteem. This finding is supported by the longitudinal studies (Connor et.al 2004) and a cross-sectional study (Connor et al.2004) that self-esteem levels remains constant with increased age, and therefore increased age was not a significant predictor of self-esteem. Thus high self-esteem or low self-esteem is not dependent on increase in age as in the case of adolescents in Labadi School.

This also means that there are other factors like social acceptance, success in academics, school environment, and socioeconomic status among others can influence self-esteem not necessarily increase in age. However other related studies are contrary to the findings that there is no positive relationship between self-esteem and age. In a longitudinal research, it was indicated that there is a gradual increase in self-esteem across adolescence (Connor et al. 2004). This might be due to the fact that they conducted a longitudinal study but for the purpose of this study a cross-sectional survey was used for the purpose of this study. Also other studies have shown that self-esteem decreased over time during adolescence (Connor et al. 2004) reported that self-esteem is highest during childhood, drops significantly during adolescence, and then increases again into adulthood.

Recommendations

It is highly recommended that adolescents should have a high self-esteem of themselves despite the fact that they are living with both or single parents. Parents should settle differences that arise in marriage and learn to stay together for the sake of their children since it was discovered that adolescents living with intact parents have a higher self-esteem. It also will have an influence on how the adolescent thinks in that if their parents ended in divorce then they would also end up in divorce if they marry. Divorce shouldn't be the last resort since it affects the adolescents' self-esteem.

In addition, for future research it should be indicated on the questionnaire whether the adolescents living with single parents was as a result of death, divorce, separation or career demands (military service for example). This will aid in testing the self-esteem for the various levels. Future research should explore whether gender differences exist in self-esteem and also whether they change as one grows up. The sample size could be increased in later research also.

Conclusion

This study examined the effect of parenting on self-esteem among adolescents of Labadi Presbyterian Secondary School. The research showed that there was a difference between the self-esteem of adolescents of intact and single parent and males having a high self-esteem than females. There was no relationship between age and self-esteem. The results gathered make clear that the availability of both parents is related to the self-esteem of their adolescents. Future research on adolescents and self-esteem will benefit the decision of parents whether to stay together or divorce. The findings of this study will help counselors in schools improve upon their programs and help children or adolescents of divorced or separated families to overcome such pain and challenges accompanied with it especially self-esteem.

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