Contribution of Self-Concept in Guidance and Counselling Among Students

Samson Barongo[*1], Callen Nyamwange[2]

1. Department of psychology, Kisii University, PO Box 408 Kisii Kenya

2. Faculty of Education - Kisii University, PO Box 408 Kisii, Kenya

* email corresponding author Samsonbarongo@yahoo.com

Abstract

Many will agree that if one takes the general success in life as a journey, then self concept qualifies to be the driving force towards that goal. Without self- concept then the work of counsellors would be a mirage. Because not unless one is able to answer the question "who am I" and clearly define his perception or image of his abilities and uniqueness; then it becomes a hard task to guide and counsel such a person. Professional counsellors should therefore strive to understand the role of self concept in the essence of guiding students to realise their dreams and goals. Counsellor educators have emphasized the importance of counsellors self concept development as a vital ingredient of counsellors education programs. However, challenges have been encountered greatly in developing program elements which aid in desired outcome; individual counselling has been recommended as one of the most logical experiences to promote self –knowledge and to assist self-concept develops. It is my intention in this paper to clearly shade lights on the role of self-mastery as a bedrock fodder for counselling purpose.

1.0 Introduction

One's **self-concept** (also called **self-construction**, **self-identity** or **self-perspective**) is a collection of beliefs about oneself that includes elements such as academic performance, gender roles and sexuality, racial identity, and many others. Generally, self-concept embodies the answer to "Who am I?"

- "Self-concept is our perception or image of our abilities and our uniqueness. At first one's self-concept is very general and changeable... As we grow older, these self-perceptions become much more organized, detailed, and specific."(Pastorino & Doyle-Portillo, 2013)
- "A self-concept is a collection of beliefs about one's own nature, unique qualities, and typical behavior. Your self-concept is your mental picture of yourself. It is a collection of self-perceptions. For example, a self-concept might include such beliefs as 'I am easygoing' or 'I am pretty' or 'I am hardworking.'" (Weiten, Dunn, & Hammer, 2012)

With self-concept, virtues such as self drive or initiative are borne. These anchor an individual's commitment. According to the French writer victor Hugo, this simply means doing the right thing without being told. Most people know what the right thing to do, but they do not unless prompted to do so. Therefore it takes personal responsibility for one to be accurately guided. Many will agree if not all that in primary schools, pupils do not wake up early, dress up, go to school, and read for their own sake. Studies show that over 60% of them do so only because their parents and teachers are strict. Counsellors, in their essence of encouraging a culture of taking initiative by students, must make them know why they lack it.

1.1 Components of self-concept necessary for counselling.

It is inarguable that self-concept includes past, present and future selves. Future or possible selves represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, or what they are afraid of becoming. These different selves correspond to one's hopes, fears, standards, goals, and threats for their present selves. Possible selves may function as incentives for future behaviour and also provide an evaluative and interpretive context for the current view of self that is used when one self-evaluates, contributing to one's self-

esteem. The perception which people have about their past or future selves is related to the perception of their current self. The temporal self-appraisal theory argues that people have a tendency to maintain a positive evaluation of the current self by distancing their self-concepts from their negative selves and paying more attention to their positive selves. In addition, people have a tendency to perceive the past self less favorably (e.g., I'm better than I used to be) and the future self more positively (e.g., I will be better than I am now).professional counsellors should therefore up-hold self-concept a great deal on the part of their clients because it forms fodder for their duty.

1.2 Is the practical Aspect Of self-concept real?

Psychologists Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow paved the way for this concept. According to Rogers, everyone strives to become more like an "ideal self". The closer one is to their ideal self, the happier one will be. Rogers also claimed that one factor in a person's happiness is unconditional positive regard, or UPR, from others. UPR often occurs in close or familial relationships, and involves a consistent level of affection regardless of the recipient's actions. Rogers explained UPR as neither approving nor disapproving of someone based on their behaviors or characteristics but rather accepting them without judgment. From a therapy frame of reference, Rogers identified the significance of a client perceiving a therapist's UPR towards them, so that the client would not feel judged as they attempt to accurately express themselves. Evidence of UPR in self-concept research is apparent in studies by Benner and Mistry (2007) and Tiedemann (2000). Research has indicated that adolescents whose mothers and teachers had high expectations for their future educational attainment experienced more academic success than those whose adult influences had lower expectations. Adults' high expectations for children are also reported as being important buffers from the negative effects of other parties' low expectations by developing feelings of positive regard in adolescents. In research about parent stereotypes, the correlation between parents' beliefs about their early elementary age children's mathematics abilities and the children's actual abilities increased as children aged. This demonstrates the strong relationship between adults' beliefs about children and children's beliefs about themselves, indicating the importance of developing unconditional positive regard for students so they can develop it themselves.

Research by Trautwein et al. (2009) indicates that children and adolescents begin integrating social comparison information into their own self-concept in elementary school by assessing their position among their peers. Gest et al.'s (2008) research findings reveal that peer acceptance has a significant impact on one's self-concept by age 5, affecting children's behavior and academic success. Both of these research examples demonstrate the social influences on a person's self-concept and how easier it can be to guide someone who has mastered himself.

1.3 Congruence and Incongruence

As elaborated above, our self-concepts are not always perfectly aligned with reality. Some students might believe that they are great at academics, but their school transcripts might tell a different story. According to Carl Rogers, the degree to which a person's self-concept matches up to reality is known as congruence and incongruence. While we all tend to distort reality to a certain degree, congruence occurs when self-concept is fairly well aligned to reality. Incongruence happens when reality does not match up to our self-concept.

Rogers believed that incongruence has its earliest roots in childhood. When parents place conditions on their affection for their children (only expressing love if children "earn it" through certain behaviours and living up to the parents' expectations), children begin to distort the memories of experiences that leave them feeling unworthy of their parents' love.

Unconditional love, on the other hand, helps to foster congruence. Children who experience such love feel no need to continually distort their memories in order to believe that other people will love and accept them as they are.

2.0 Model of self-concept, fodder for counseling.

Many counselors if not all will acknowledge the contribution of self-concept as an internal model that uses self-assessments in order to define one's self-schemas. Features such as personality, skills and abilities, occupation(s) and hobbies, physical characteristics, etc. are assessed and applied to self-schemas, which are

ideas one has of oneself in a particular dimension (e.g., students that considers themselves stars will associate star-like qualities and be an expert on those qualities). A collection of self-schemas make up one's overall self-concept. For example, the statement "I am lazy" is a self-assessment that contributes to the self-concept. Therefore, once we have self-concept taking root in our students then giving them professional direction would not be a challenge.

2.1 Academic self-concept

Academic Self-Concept (ASC) refers to the personal beliefs someone develops about their academic abilities or skills. A person's ASC develops and evolves as they age. Some research suggests that ASC begins developing in early childhood, from age 3 to 5, due to parental/family and early educators' influences, while other research contends that ASC does not develop until age 7 or 8, when children begin evaluating their own academic abilities based on the feedback they receive from parents, teachers and their peers. By age 10 or 11, children view their academic abilities by comparing themselves to their peers. These social comparisons are also referred to as self-estimates. Self-estimates are frequently utilized to help one form an idea of oneself. Research shows that self-estimate of cognitive ability were most accurate when numerical ability was estimated. Furthermore, research shows that self-estimates were more likely to be poor in other areas of cognitive ability such as reasoning speed that are considered less frequently.

There are a variety of social factors that contribute to development of an ASC and developing a positive ASC has been related to people's behaviors and emotions in other domains of their life, influencing happiness, self-esteem, and anxiety levels to name a few. Due to the significant impact ASC has on a person's life, it has been argued that educational systems should foster positive self-concept development in children.

These research findings are important because they have practical implications for parents and teachers. Research indicates that parents and teachers need to provide children with specific feedback that focuses on their particular skills or expressed abilities in order to increase ASC. Other research suggests that learning opportunities should be conducted in a variety of mixed-ability and like-ability groupings that down-play social comparison because too much of either type of grouping can have adverse effects on children's ASC in the way they view themselves in relation to their peers.

2.2 Effects of success and Failure

Various studies have examined the effects that success and failure can have on an individual's self-concept. Individuals often form their self-concept based on past experiences of success or failure, attributing the outcome to their own personal worth. By doing this, individuals can commit the fundamental attribution error. In this case, the error may arise when the person falsely believes that a specific aspect of who they are determined the positive or negative outcome. By attributing a negative outcome to oneself, self-concept can be unnecessarily harmed. However, attributing positive outcomes to oneself can increase self-concept. These attributions can even have an effect on self-perception, achievement behaviors in the future, and expectancies. Austin and Vispoel (1998) found strong links between where an individual attributed success or failure and, specifically, musical self-concept.

Changes in self-concept can be mediated and predicted by various factors. One important factor in academics is evaluation of performance by peers, or peer academic reputation (PAR). Gest, Rulison, Davidson, and Welsh (2008) found evidence for the predictive ability of PAR with regard to Students' in upper grades academic self-concept. If a student has a reputation for success or failure in the academic setting, the student may develop a negative self-concept. This shows that it is may not only be the actual success or failure that has an effect, but may also be the secondary effects of poor academic reputation among peers that influence students' self-concept.

There are also effects that have been studying by looking at how self-concept can influence success or failure and attributions of success and failure. In a study of university undergraduate students, self-esteem was studied by examining students' attributions for their success or failure after being given a word association test. Dutton and Brown (1997) found that self-esteem could predict participants' attribution of their success or failure in the word test. Individuals with high self-esteem tended to make more self-serving attributions to outcomes than did individuals with low self-esteem.

2.3 Expectations, conditioning and gauging

According to Kathleen Berger, author of *The Developing Person*, guilt plays a significant role in shaping a young child's self-concept. As an example, she describes a child that is coddled at home, and his/her socially unacceptable behavior is never thwarted by the parent(s). When the child is denied whatever they want from another child, he/she strikes out towards other children, not understanding that there will be consequences and possible retaliation. If this kind of behavior were to occur in a classroom environment, a teacher could use guilt in an attempt to shape the spoiled child's self-concept by reminding the student that hitting others is not acceptable in most social situations. In essence, guilt shapes behavior. Berger goes on to explain that most children over the age of 5 have some sense of the rules and regulations that govern social behavior that they learn from a guardian, thus shaping their self-concept without using guilt. In some cases, if maladaptive behavior is left unchecked, the seeds of bullying could start to germinate.

Self-concept is linked directly to a person's level of anxiety, according to the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers. According to Rogers, if a child feels highly valued and wanted, that person is more likely to grow up with a positive self-image, with the possibility of becoming self-actualized. Rogers describes this individual as a *fully functioning person* with a low level of anxiety, which he attributes to inconsistencies between self-perceptions and possible-self. Here again, expectations play a major role in shaping self-concept. Dr. Rogers hypothesizes that psychologically healthy people actively move away from roles created by others' expectations but instead look within themselves for validation.

To gauge a child's self-concept, Susan Harter developed the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents. In it, domains such as scholastic competence, behavior conduct, close friendships, social acceptance, athletic competence, romantic appeal, and physical appearance are rated using a number of indicators. Some of the positive indicators include whether the child or adolescent expresses their opinion, maintains eye contact during conversion, works cooperatively in a group, maintains a comfortable space between self and others, and uses proper voice levels for various situation. Negative indicators could include teasing, gossiping, using dramatic gesturing, engaging in inappropriate touching or avoiding physical contact, verbally putting down self or others, or bragging about achievements, skills, or appearance.

2.4 Culture recipe for self-concept

It is indisputable that culture affects ones choice on who one becomes and what one can achieve. It forms the whole set of standards that dictate ones way of thinking and view of success. Many people miss what it means to think great because a backward culture trains them to think small. A backward culture is harmful because it chains the mind as opposed to a good one which gives a sense of assurance and belief in one's self. The Social comparison theory states that people strive to accurately define themselves and therefore utilize social comparisons to accurately define the self during the self-evaluative process. Within these social comparisons, one will find upward (e.g., positive) and downward (e.g., negative) comparisons that can either enhance or threaten our self-concept and self-esteem. In such cases where we feel threatened, it is not uncommon to make explanations for why we are not performing to the same degree as others, thereby preserving our self-concept and self-esteem.

2.5 The development perspective

Research by Tiedemann (2000) found that parents' and teachers' gender stereotypes about children's mathematical abilities influenced children's self-concepts about their mathematical ability prior to having extensive experience with math in school. Tiedemann's (2000) research findings also indicate that the correlation between adult's gendered stereotypes and children's beliefs about themselves increased as children aged throughout elementary school. Additional research by Benner and Mistry (2007) indicates that parent's initial expectations for their children, during early childhood, correlate with children's academic success. These findings highlight the influence of adult stereotypes and expectations on children's self-concept formation.

Research by Maccoby (1990) found that boys and girls choose same-sex play partners by age 3 and maintain their preferences until late elementary school. Boys and girls become involved in different social interactions and relationships. Girls tend to prefer one-on-one dyadic interaction, while boys prefer group activities. Girls tend to

share secrets and form tight, intimate bonds with one another. Furthermore, girls are more likely to wait their turn to speak, agree with others, and acknowledge the contributions of others. Boys, on the other hand, build larger group relationships based on shared interests and activities. Boys are more likely to threaten, boast, and call names, suggesting the importance of dominance and hierarchy in groups of male friends. Subsequently, the social characteristics of boys and girls tend to carry over later in life as they become men and women.

Researchers debate when self-concept development begins but agree on the importance of person's life. Tiedemann (2000) indicates that parents' gender stereotypes and expectations for their children impact children's understandings of themselves by approximately age 3.Others suggest that self-concept develops later, around age 7 or 8, as children are developmentally prepared to begin interpreting their own feelings, abilities, and interpretations of feedback they receive from parents, teachers, and peers about themselves. Despite differing opinions about the onset of self-concept development, researchers agree on the importance of one's self-concept, which influences people's behaviors and cognitive and emotional outcomes including (but not limited to) academic achievement, levels of happiness, anxiety, social integration, self-esteem, and life-satisfaction.

3 conclusions

 Professional counselors, psychologists, teachers, parents and any other person who has been in the counseling field will yield to the agendum that self-concept and its components have laid vital ingredients which have always formed the basis of guidance and counseling especially among students. The counseling field therefore, cannot simply ignore its contribution in the essence of guidance. Undoubtedly, with self-concept one stands a chance to pursue their pledges to the end in life so long as you have realized that you are your own captain and ready to break free from culture that do not encourage self-drive. Franklin Delano Roosevelt the 32nd president of the United States, despite being paralyzed at a tender age, through his commitment and self-drive became a president and made major and lasting impact on his country. Harry Truman who was his successor, said," in reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves-----self-awareness with all of them came first". In this sense self-concept qualifies to be the common denominator for great people. Take Jesus the best example of greatness. He could have chosen to avoid death but he did not, why? He understood what he was and what he was meant for.

In conclusion, it is true that self-concept cloth with it vital virtues that are fodder for the general successful growth of a person. And; these are the bedrock of the counselors work. Therefore it is necessary that counselors evaluate their 'patients', whether they know themselves, before they can administer their right 'dose' on them.

References

1. Leflot, G., Onghena, P., & Colpin, H. (2010). Teacher-Child Interactions: Relations with children's self-concept in second grade. *Infant and Child Development, 19(4).* 385-405. doi:10.1002/icd.672

2. Flook, L., Repetti, & R. L., & Ullman, J. B. (2005). Classroom social experiences as predictors of academic performance. *Developmental Psychology, 41(2),*319-327. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.41.2.319

3. Bong, M., & Clark, R. E. (1999). Comparison between self-concept and self-efficacy in academic motivation research. *Educational Psychologist*, 34(3), 139-153.

4. Byrne, B. M. (1984). The general/academic self-concept nomological network: A review of construct validation research. *Review of Educational Research*, 54, 427-456.

5. Byrne, B. M., & Worth Gavin, D. A. (1996). The Shavelson model revisited: Testing for the structure of academic self-concept across pre-, early, and late adolescents. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 88, 215-228.

6. Shavelson, R. J., & Bolus, R. (1982). Self-concept: The interplay of theory and methods. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 74, 3-17.

7. Shavelson, R. J., Hubner, J. J., & Stanton, G. C. (1976). Self-concept: Validation of construct interpretations. *Review of Educational Research*, 46, 407-441.

8. Hoffman, Rose Marie, John A. Hattie, and L. DiAnne Borders. "Personal definitions of masculinity and femininity as an aspect of gender self-concept." *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development* 44.1 (2005): 66+.

9. Wade, Jay C. "Male reference group identity dependence: a theory of male identity." *The Counselling Psychologist* 26.3 (1998): 349+.

10. Hoffman, Rose Marie. "Conceptualizing heterosexual identity development: issues and challenges." *Journal of Counselling and Development,* 82.3 (2004): 375+.

11. Aries, Elizabeth, et al. "Race and gender as components of the working self-concept." *The Journal of Social Psychology* 138.3 (1998): 277+.

12. Myers, David G. (2009). *Social psychology* (10th ed. ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education. ISBN 0073370665.

13. Ayduk, Ozlem, Anett Gyurak, and Anna Luerssen. "Rejection sensitivity moderates the impact of rejection on self-concept clarity." Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin 35.11 (2009): 1467+.

14. Fleming, J. S.; Courtney, B. E. (1984). "The dimensionality of self-esteem: II Hierarchical facet model for revised measurement scales". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 46 (2): 404–421. doi10.1037/0022-3514.46.2.404.

15. Markus, H.; Nurius, P. (1986). "Possible selves". *American Psychologist* 41 (9): 954–969. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.41.9.954.

16. Wilson, A. E., & Ross, M. (2001). From chump to champ: People's appraisals of their earlier and present selves. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80, 572-584.

17. Ross, M., & Wilson, A. E. (2002). It feels like yesterday: Self-esteem, valence of personal past experience, and judgments of subjective distance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 82*, 792-803.

18. Wilson, A. E., Buehler, R., Lawford, H., Schmidt, C., & Yong, A. G. (2012). Basking in projected glory: The role of subjective temporal distance in future self-appraisal. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 42*, 342-353.

19. Kass, Michael (1994). "Michael Kass's notes on the humanistic theories of psychology as told by Kevin Travis (bonus pts.)"

20. Rogers, C. (1992). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 60(6),* 827-827-832. doi:10.1037/0022-006X.60.6.827

21. Benner, A.D, Mistry, R.S. (2007). Congruence of mother and teacher educational expectations and low-income youth's academic competence. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 99* (1). *140-153. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.99.1.140*

22. Benner, A.D, Mistry, R.S. (2007). Congruence of mother and teacher educational expectations and low-income youth's academic competence. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 99 (1).* 140-153. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.99.1.140

23. Tiedemann, J. (2000). Parents' gender stereotypes and teachers' beliefs as predictors of children's concept of their mathematical ability in elementary school. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 92(1),* 144-144-151. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.92.1.144

24. Guimond, Serge; Chatard, Armand; Martinot, Delphine; Crisp, Richard J.; Redersdorff, Sandrine. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 90(2), Feb 2006, 221-242.

25. Trautwein, U., Ludtke, O., Nagy, G., Marsh, H.W. (2009). Within-School Social Comparisons: How students perceive the standing of their class predicts academic self-concept. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 101 (4).* 853-866. doi:10.1037/a0016306

26. Gest, S.D., Rulison, K. L., Davidson, A. J., & Welsh, J. A. (2008). A Reputation for Success (or Failure): The Association of Peer Academic Reputations With Academic Self-Concept, Effort, and Performance Across the Upper Elementary Grades. *Developmental Psychology, 44 (3).* 625-636. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.44.3.625

27. Gerrig, Richard J.; Zimbardo, Philip G. (2002). "Glossary of Psychological Terms". *Psychology and Life*. Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA. Retrieved 14 March 2011.

28. Leflot, G., Onghena, P., & Colpin, H. (2010). Teacher-Child Interactions: Relations with children's self-concept in second grade. *Infant and Child Development, 19(4).*385-405. doi:10.1002/icd.672

29. Rubie-Davies, C. (2006). Teacher expectations and student self-perceptions: Exploring relationships. *Psychology in the Schools, 43(5),* 537-537-552. doi:10.1002/pits.20169

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:
http://www.iiste.org

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There's no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** http://www.iiste.org/journals/ The IISTE editorial team promises to the review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: http://www.iiste.org/book/

Recent conferences: http://www.iiste.org/conference/

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digtial Library , NewJour, Google Scholar