



# Adolescents' self-esteem: assessment of the roles of religiosity, gender and parenting style

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## Abstract

*The study investigated roles of religiosity, gender and parenting styles on self-esteem of adolescents in Enugu State, Nigeria. Two hundred and eighty-two (282) Secondary School (SS) students in SS classes I, II and III, drawn from Community Secondary Schools (CSS) participated in the study. Participants comprised 134 males and 148 females within the age range of 14 and 17 years, with a mean age of 16.6 years. All the participants were from two-parent homes. Three of instruments were used for data collection: Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, Parenting Authority Questionnaire and Religiosity Scale. The results indicated a statistically significant influence of parenting styles on self-esteem,  $p < .05$ ; significant role of religiosity on self-esteem of adolescents,  $p < .001$ . The result also indicated a non-significant gender differences in self-esteem of adolescents, and non-significant interaction of parenting style, gender and religiosity on self-esteem of adolescents. The results were discussed in terms of the relevance of religiosity and parenting style in self-esteem of the adolescents. Though the result of the study may be partly attributed to the roles of some other factors, such as economic adversity, that were not accounted for in the study. However, it was concluded that higher self-esteem in adolescents is positively related to authoritative parenting style and adolescents' higher religiosity.*

*Keywords: Self-esteem; Adolescents; Authoritative parenting; Religiosity; Gender; Nigeria.*

## Introduction

The style parents adopt in training their children may influence their self-esteem by influencing their feelings of acceptance or rejection (Rohner, 2004). Maccoby and Martin (1983) opine that parenting style captures two important elements of parenting: parental responsiveness and parental demandingness. Parental responsiveness is referred to as parental warmth and supportiveness while parental demandingness is referred to as behavioural control. Categorizing parents according to whether they are high or low on parental demandingness and responsiveness creates a typology of four parenting styles: permissive (or indulgent), authoritarian, authoritative, and uninvolved (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Baumrind (1991) observed that each of these parenting styles reflects different naturally occurring patterns of parental values, practices and behaviours, and a distinct balance of responsiveness and

demandingness. Permissive parents are more responsive than they are demanding. They are nontraditional and lenient, allow considerable self-regulation and avoid confrontation. Authoritarian parents are highly demanding and directive, but less responsive. They are status-oriented and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation. Authoritarian parents provide well-ordered and structured environment with clearly stated rules. Authoritative parents are both demanding and responsive. They monitor and impart clear standards for their children's conduct. One key difference between authoritarian and authoritative parenting is in the dimension of emotional control (Barber, 1996). Both styles place high demand on their children and expect their children to behave appropriately and obey parental rules. Authoritarian parents, however, also expect their children to accept their judgment, values and goals without questioning. In contrast, authoritative parents are more open to give and take with their children and make greater use of explanations. Thus, while both parenting styles are equally high on behavioural control, authoritative parents tend to be low on emotional control, compared to authoritarian parents. Uninvolved parents are low in both responsiveness and demandingness.

Self-esteem is one of the factors that is likely to affect the mental health of children (Olanrewaju & Oyadeyi, 2014). Self-esteem refers to the positive or negative evaluations of the self and how one feels about oneself (Smith & Mackie, 2007). Rosenberg (1965) identified two major types of self-esteem: High Self-Esteem and Low Self-Esteem. High Self-Esteem has to do with one's high or positive view about oneself. Mogonea and Mogonea (2014) observed that the level of self-esteem is shown in the adolescents' attitude and behaviour, both at home and at school. The adolescents with high level of self-esteem are capable of influencing positively the opinion and behaviour of others; they tackle new situations positively and confidently; they have a high level of tolerance towards frustration; they accept early responsibility, and succeed in having good self-control the belief that the things they are undergoing are the result of their behaviour and actions (Lavoie, 2012). On the other hand, people with low self-esteem suffer from feelings of worthlessness, inferiority, and emotional instability, so leading to dissatisfaction with life (Smith & Mackie, 2007; Rosenberg, 1965). The link between self-esteem and parenting style has been documented in both local and western studies (e.g. Osenwegwor, 2016; Weiten, Lloyd, Dunn, & Hammer, 2008; Baumrind, 1991). Baumrind and Black (as cited in Cardinali & D'Allura, 2001) mentioned that adolescents who are treated authoritatively become more socially adjusted and independent compare to their peers. In Nigeria, Osenwegwor, (2016) investigated the relationship between perceived parenting styles (mothers' and fathers') and self-esteem. Results revealed significant positive correlation between maternal authoritativeness and self-esteem of the adolescents.

Gender (male or female) of the adolescent is another variable of interest that seems to be a factor in self-esteem development. Studies show that there are obvious difference between boys and girls and that may lead to differences in parenting. Research suggested that both boys and girls face different issues in life. So, the parenting is modified according to those issues. For example, studies show that girls need more emotional support and boys need more independence from parents. Therefore girls need more parental acceptance and boys need more

parental autonomy granting (Leaper, 2002). There are different theoretical evidences that support gender differences in parenting. Chodrow (1978) presented a psychoanalytical view about the gender differences in parenting. According to this theory, mother and daughter are of same sex therefore the daughter's identification with mother is much stronger than sons. Eckes and Trautner, (2012) hold that the father demonstrated greater differential treatment between sons and daughters than the mothers. Thus, father promoted greater traditional gendered typed behaviour in sons and daughters, for example sons are encouraged to be independent in their behaviour and daughters to be more dependent.

Gender Schema theory (Bem, 1981) holds that males and females act according to the appropriate learned cultural definition of gender. Parents expect that the sons would take up the role of main bread earner and daughters would perform role of caregiving. Therefore, mothers and fathers may encourage different behaviours in their sons and daughters in accordance to their schema of gender. Gender role theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 1999) recommends that the traditional father's role is of primary bread earner and mother's role is primary caregiver and housekeeper. These fathers were acting as main disciplinarian and thus demonstrated authoritarian parenting style, (Blakemore, Berenbaum, Liben, 2009) whereas mother considered being more nurturing and demonstrated authoritative parenting style (Conrade & Robert, 2001). Fathers usually spent more time with boys than with girls as they believed that sons need father more as a role model than do the daughters while mothers and daughters share more powerful and deep relationship than the daughters and fathers. (Raley & Bianchi, 2006). However, due to increase in urbanization and encouragement given to women's rights and education this trend is changing. For example, Vyas and Bano (2016) focus is on how the child's characteristics especially gender determine the parenting style of the parents and found that fathers used authoritative parenting style for girls more than boys and authoritarian parenting style for boys more than girls. This shift in parenting styles of fathers for girls signifies that fathers are becoming more involved, responsive and caring towards the adolescent girls.

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. In explaining his psychosocial theory of human development, Erikson (1980) observed that adolescent boys without fathers in their lives lack the natural role-model they need as they engage in the processes of identity formation. A study by Cheyne (1989) found that girls who had grown up in father-absent households were more likely to experience insecurity, abuse, anxiety, depression and difficulties in relationship with men. Mruk (1995) observed that adolescents with parents who are absent frequently or for long periods of time display lower levels of self-esteem. Thus, adolescents often view this parental absence as a sort of rejection and in turn question their worth (Kridler 2002). Self-reports of self-esteem among the adolescence, however, run in a continuum of low and high self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965), and may be dependent on other factors beyond parental absence.

Many studies have linked gender to global self-esteem in adolescence and young adulthood (Erol & Orth, 2011). Findings on potential gender differences in rates of self-esteem

development are to a larger degree mixed, with some studies reporting stable differences (Wagner & Ludtke, Jonkmann, & Trautwein, 2013) and others reporting decreasing differences from adolescence to young adulthood (Galambos, Barker, & Krahn 2006). Independent of the specific changes in gender differences, these differences in both adolescence and young adulthood have been considered to be rather small in size (Orth, 2012). Robust findings emerging from different literatures (e.g. Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswel, 1999; Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling, & Potter, 2002; Zeigler-Hill & Myers, 2012) indicate significant gender gap such that males tend to report higher levels of self-esteem than females do.

Religiosity is another factor that is likely to mold self-esteem of adolescents irrespective of gender. Religiosity has to do with the extent to which individual clients engage in religious activities, hold strong religious views and believe in prescribed religious practices (Idehen, 2001). Maintaining religious standards often means that individuals must endure considerable discomfort and forsake many pleasurable experiences. However, if anything, empirical findings (e.g., Neyrinck, Vansteenkiste, Lens, Duriez, & Hutsebaut, 2006; Ryan, Rigby, & King, 1993; Smith, McCullough, & Poll, 2003) suggest the opposite. Studies (e.g. Ellison & Henderson, 2011; Pargament & Brant 1998; Hackney & Sanders, 2003; Nooney, 2005) have shown that religiosity is positively related to self-esteem. But no study has been conducted on the combined influence of religiosity, gender and parenting style as they affect self-esteem among adolescents, especially in rural areas in developing countries. Stack (1983) concluded that decreased religious integration is likely to influence one's self-esteem negatively. Some unwelcoming attitudes of the parents are likely to influence child's self-esteem negatively, especially in religious matters. However, the positive and negative strength of parental authority (Buri, 1991) (responsiveness and demandingness) which are shown in the categories of parenting style (permissive, authoritarian and authoritative) (Baumrind, 1991), may modify this influence.

The aim of this study is to ascertain whether religiosity, gender and parenting styles play any role in self-esteem of adolescents in Enugu State. Specifically, the study examined: (i) whether religiosity played significant role in self-esteem of adolescents; (ii) whether gender played significant role in self-esteem of adolescents; (iii) whether parenting style played significant role in self-esteem of adolescents, and (iv) whether there was a significant interaction of religiosity, gender and parenting styles on self-esteem of adolescents.

We hypothesize that:

1. Religiosity will play significant role self-esteem;
2. Parenting style will play significant role in self-esteem;
3. Gender will play significant role in self-esteem;
4. There will be significant interaction of religiosity, parenting style and gender on self-esteem.

## **Method**

The participants comprised 282 Secondary School (SS) Students (148 females and 134 males; 28 highly religious and 210 less religious; 111 raised by authoritarian parents; 42 by permissive parents, and 129 by authoritative parents) (14 - 17 years,  $M = 15.64$ ,  $SD = 2.71$ ) drawn by simple random sampling from the Senior Secondary (SS) classes in 12 secondary schools in

the rural areas of Enugu State, namely; Community Secondary School (CSS) Agbani and CSS Obe (Agbani zone); CSS Egede and CSS Okpatu (Udi zone); CSS Obimo and CSS Okpuje (Nsukka zone); CSS Obollo-Afor and CSS Obollo-Etiti (Obollo-Afor zone); CSS Ihe and CSS Agbudu Awgu (Awgu zone); CSS Ugwogo Nike and CSS Ugwuaji and CSS Iva Vally (Enugu zone).

Three instruments were used for data collection: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), Religiosity Scale (Pearce, Hayward & Pearlman, 2017), and Parenting Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1989).

### **Self-esteem Scale**

Self-esteem Scale is a 10-item scale developed by Rosenberg (1965). It was developed for measuring ones view or regard about oneself. The instrument was based on four point Likert-type format ranging from (strongly agree) to (strongly disagree). Items 2,5,6,8 and 9 were reversely scored while items 1,3,4,7, and 10 were scored in direct order. Hence, a least possible score of 10 and a highest possible score of 40 could be obtained by any given respondent. The reliability of the instrument on self-esteem was determined by Omoluabi (1997) using test-retest reliability. He obtained an alpha coefficient of 0.78 on the self-esteem scale. Ebiai (1986) obtained a concurrent validity of 0.47. In revalidating the scale, we conducted item analysis using the responses of 60 adolescents from New Haven Secondary School, Enugu State and obtained a Cronbach's Alpha of .77. We also conducted a test-retest reliability check using 60 adolescent participants drawn by simple random sampling from 2 private secondary schools in Nsukka (Shalom Academy and Obfo International Academy). The two-week interval of test-retest reliability yielded a correlation coefficient of .27 that was significant at .05 level of probability.

### **Religiosity Scale**

Religiosity Scale is a multi-dimension (scale containing items with both dichotomous and multiple options) scale containing 21 indicators of religiosity that are placed in five dimensions of religiosity: religious beliefs, religious exclusivity, external practice, private practice, and religious salience (Pearce, Hayward & Pearlman, 2017). Pearce, Hayward & Pearlman (2017) theorized and tested a latent variable model of adolescent religiosity in which five dimensions of religiosity are interrelated: religious beliefs, religious exclusivity, external practice, private practice, and religious salience. They used a longitudinal structural equation modeling with latent variables to analyze data from two waves of the National Study of Youth and Religion (3370 respondents from Wave 1, and the 2596 respondents from Wave 2). They tested their hypothesized measurement model as compared to four alternate measurement models and found that their proposed model maintains superior fit. For the present study, using 60 adolescent participants drawn by simple random sampling from 2 private secondary schools in Nsukka (Shalom Academy and Obfo International Academy), a two-week interval of test-retest reliability check on religiosity scale yielded a correlation coefficient of .26; significant at .05 level of probability. Total score on the scale is obtained by adding the scores of all the subscales. The highest score on the scale is 42 while the lowest score is 4. Observation of the mean scores of the reliability sample indicates a mean of 21.7. Therefore, higher religiosity is

represented by scores ranging from 22 to 42, while less religiosity is represented by scores ranging from 4 to 21.

### **Parental Authority Questionnaire**

Parenting styles were measured using the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) developed by Buri (1991). The 30-item instrument consisted of three 10-item sub-scales developed to measure 3 parental disciplinary practices that are interrelated - permissive, authoritarian and authoritative styles (Baumrind, 1991), from the point of view of the child of any age. The items in the three subscales are as follows: permissive (P: items 1, 6, 10, 13, 14, 17, 19, 21, 24 and 28), authoritarian (A: items 2, 3, 7, 9, 12, 16, 18, 25, 26 and 29), and authoritative (F: items 4, 5, 8, 11, 15, 20, 22, 23, 27, and 30). The response options were on 5-point Likert-format ranging from strongly disagree (scored 1) to strongly agreed (scored 5); all items were directly scored. Sub-scale scores range from 10 to 50. Greater appraised levels of the parental authority prototype yield higher scores. In validation studies (Buri, 1991), items were constructed based on Baumrind's descriptions of the parenting style prototypes and then subjected to multidisciplinary expert review. The PAQ appeared to have good internal consistency (range = .74 – .87) and test-retest reliability ranged from .77 to .92. According to him, alpha coefficient of .75 was for permissive, .85 for authoritarian and .82 for authoritative scale while good stability in test-retest reliability obtained were .81, .86, .78 for permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative scale respectively. According to Buri (1991) (as cited in Timpano, Keough, Mahaffey, Schmidt, & Abramowitz, 2010), PAQ has high criterion and content validity. Using 60 adolescent participants drawn by simple random sampling from 2 private secondary schools in Nsukka (Shalom Academy and Obfo International Academy), a two-week interval of test-retest reliability check on PAQ yielded a correlation coefficient of .66; significant at .01 level of probability.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Before drawing sample for the study, we wrote a letter to the Enugu State Commissioner for Education, seeking the permission of the Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB), Enugu State to conduct a research involving Secondary School Students in the State. At the approval by the PPSMB, we randomly drew 12 secondary schools from the list of 313 secondary schools in Enugu State and thereafter went to the different schools to introduce the study to the school principals before conducting the research, except New Haven Secondary School, Shalom Academy and Obfo International Academy that was used for pilot study. Introduction of the research and the actual conduct of the research in the different schools were facilitated by research assistants, considering the geographical locations of the schools. From the pool of about 313 secondary schools in Enugu State, 12 community secondary schools were randomly drawn (2 schools from each of the 6 educational zones) for the study. To select the schools, pieces of papers were folded and put in a black bag and each research assistant picked 2 CSS from any of the 6 senatorial zones.

In drawing the study sample, the students were first grouped according to their various classes; Senior Secondary (SS) class 1, Senior Secondary (SS) class II and Senior Secondary (SS) class III. To draw the students from the classes, simple random sampling technique was used in

separate draws for both boys and girls; with each draw involving the presentation of 20 pieces of papers (5 blue and others white) and allowing the students to pick one. A clear instruction, that only students from two-parent homes will participate, was given. This was to eliminate extraneous influence of single parenting. Those who picked blue were given the questionnaire to fill. In each of the schools, 10 students (5 boys and 5 girls) were randomly drawn from each poll of the senior classes, making it 30 students from each of the 12 schools, and making up a sample size of 360 students. This is a representative sample considering that only community secondary schools in rural areas, with a mix of boys and girls, were used for the study. The copies of the questionnaire were filled and returned immediately. Out of the 360 copies of the questionnaire distributed, only 310 were returned. However, 28 copies of the 310 copies were not properly filled. This left the researchers with only 282 copies of the questionnaire instruments for data analysis.

The design of the study is cross-sectional survey. This is based on the premise that survey design is a design employed when collecting data to make inference about a population of interest at one point in time (Olsen & George, 2004). Three independent variables (religiosity, gender and parenting styles) with different levels each (Religiosity = High and Low; Gender= males and females; Parenting style= permissive, authoritarian and authoritative) was tested under one dependent variable (Self-esteem) in the study. We intended to ascertain how males and females raised with different parenting styles, and who are higher or less on religiosity differ in self-esteem scores. We therefore categorized the participants along the levels of the independent variables (thus, participants who load higher on permissive parenting came under permissive parenting category and so on; religiosity was categorized using the average score on the instrument: below 21.7 is less religious while above 21.7 is higher religiosity) and used three- way analysis of variance (3-Way ANOVA) making up 2x2x3 F-test as the statistical tools in the study.

The variations in number of participants who were highly religious (28) and those who were less religious (210) and number who were raised by authoritarian parents (111), permissive parents (42) and authoritative parents (129) were beyond our control given that the religiosity and parenting care scales were distributed after the sample had been drawn. The strategy was for double-blind control; only gender mix was given prior consideration.

## Results

**Table 1**

*Summary of table of Means and Standard deviations of religiosity, parenting styles and gender on self-esteem of adolescents*

Independent Variables	Factors	Means	Standard Deviations	Number of participants
Religiosity	Less religious	22.53	3.97	210
	Highly religious	25.82	4.77	28
Gender	Males	23.35	4.10	134
	Females	23.37	4.67	148
Parenting Styles	Authoritarian	22.67	3.79	111
	Permissive	21.76	3.93	42
	Authoritative	24.47	4.76	129



Results of Means in Table 1 above show that participants who experienced authoritative parenting style obtained the highest total mean score on self-esteem ( $M = 24.47$ ) when compared with participants who experience authoritarian parenting style ( $M = 22.68$ ) and those who experienced permissive parenting style ( $M = 21.76$ ). Results in Table 1 above also shows that participants who were less religious obtained a total lower mean on self-esteem ( $M = 22.53$ ) when compared with participants with high religiosity and who obtained a total higher mean of 25.79 on self-esteem. Table 1 further shows that female participants obtained a relatively equal total mean of 23.37 on self-esteem when compared to the total mean of males which is 23.35.

**Table 2**  
*ANOVA Summary of religiosity, parenting styles and gender on self-esteem of adolescents*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Level of significance
Religiosity	435.12	1	435.11	26.69	.000**
Gender	3.998	1	3.99	.25	.621
Parenting Style	215.48	2	107.74	6.61	.002*
Religiosity * Parenting Style	36.58	2	18.29	1.12	.327
Parenting Style * Gender	26.35	2	13.17	.80	.447
Religiosity * Gender	2.19	1	2.19	.13	.715
Religiosity* Gender * Parenting Style	81.58	2	40.79	2.50	.084
Error	4401.11	270	16.30		
<b>Total</b>	<b>159395.00</b>	<b>282</b>			

\*\*P < .001, \*p < .01

Religiosity played significant role in self-esteem of adolescents,  $F(1, 270) = 26.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $p = .000$ . This means that there was a significant difference between adolescents who are highly religious and those who are less religious on self-esteem. Pairwise comparisons (see Table 1 for group means) showed that adolescents who scored higher on religiosity also obtained higher self-esteem scores than adolescents who scored less on religiosity. Thus, hypothesis 1 was accepted. Parenting style played significant role in self-esteem of adolescents,  $F(2,270) = 6.61$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $p = .002$ ; there was a significant difference between adolescents who experienced authoritative parenting style and those who experienced authoritarian and permissive styles on self-esteem. Pairwise comparisons (see Table 1 for group means) showed that adolescents with authoritative parents obtained higher self-esteem scores than adolescents with permissive parents, or authoritarian parents. Thus, hypothesis 2 was accepted. The result indicates that gender played non-significant role in self-esteem of adolescents. Thus, hypothesis 3 was rejected. No significant interaction was indicated. Thus, hypothesis 4 was rejected.

## **Discussion**

The result of ANOVA showed that religiosity played significant role in self-esteem as shown by higher self-esteem scores of adolescents who are higher on religiosity. This result is consistent with Yaakub (2017) who carried out a study to determine the relationship between religiosity, mental health and self-esteem in Muslim Students at the University of Brunei Darussalam.

Some factors that were unaccounted for in this study may have contributed to the result of this study. For example parents' behavior that provides a good example to their children and may be positively correlated with religiosity in the family. Religiosity in the family may also be positively correlated with avoidance of deviant behaviours which apparently lacks social acceptance, and mostly attributed to non compliance to religious norms. This may have prepared the ground upon which those who are highly religious regard themselves as more "worthy" and psychologically healthy to interact and lead others (an attribute of higher self-esteem).

In the ANOVA, parenting style played significant role in adolescents' self-esteem. This result is consistent with the Rohner's (2004) Parental-Acceptance-Rejection Theory (PARTheory) which posits that children's sense of self tend to be dependent on the quality of their relationship with their parents. The result is in congruence with a Nigerian-based study (Osenwegwuor, 2016) which found significant positive correlations between parenting style and self-esteem. It is possible that some unaccounted factors in this study, such as economic adversity in Nigeria, may have correlated with parenting to influence the differences in levels of adolescents' self-esteem. The result however, correlated with studies conducted outside Nigeria (Weiten et al., 2008; Baumrind, 1991). Mean comparisons show that adolescents with authoritative parents showed higher self-esteem than adolescents with permissive parents or authoritative parents. Authoritative parenting is likely to be correlated with other factors unaccounted for such as being well informed about parenting which contributes to building higher self-esteem in children.

There was no significant role of gender on self-esteem of adolescents. This result is not consistent with previous studies such as Kling et al., (1999); Bleidorn and Ruben (2015) found significant gender differences in self-esteem. It could be that locality (urban versus rural areas), which were unaccounted for, correlate with gender to influence self-esteem.

The result indicates non-significant interactions of religiosity, parenting styles and gender on adolescents' self-esteem. This showed that the influence of any of the independent variables was not significantly associated with another. However, some factors unaccounted for such as age may provide the link between these variables on self-esteem. Maturity and experiences that come with age may act upon religiosity and parenting to influence scores on self-esteem.

## **Summary and conclusion**

We investigated the roles of religiosity, parenting styles and gender on self-esteem of adolescents in Enugu State, Nigeria. The result of the study showed that religiosity and parenting style played significant roles in self-esteem of adolescents. The study implicated some unaccounted factors such as economic adversity, parents' education on parenting and age

of participants that may be correlated with religiosity in the family and parent-child relationship to influence self-esteem of adolescents. Therefore, we conclude that family is an important index of self-esteem. While we did not account for other factors that may correlate with aspects of the family to influence self-esteem, it is worthy of note that society should support good family health and positive family relations through the various programmes of government and individuals in society. Further should look more closely at those correlates of family that may have influence on self-esteem, and more robust statistics such as multiple regression should be used in future analyses of these variables.

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