

Self-esteem as a component of subjective well-being of students

La autoestima como componente del bienestar subjetivo de los estudiantes

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this study is to identify the specific and structural features of self-esteem as a component of subjective well-being of young girls. The relevance of this topic is due to the need for a deeper understanding mechanisms for maintaining psychological health, as well as the development of subjectivity in the framework of self-supporting behavioral strategies. The study was an eight survey-type method. Girls (n = 100) - students of the philological faculty of the RUDN University took part in this investigation. The results of the empirical research shows that adolescence girls with higher levels of self-esteem have higher rates of self-interest, self-understanding, positive global self-attitude, self-confidence, auto-sympathy, expected other attitudes, self-acceptance, self-consistency, overall satisfaction with external data. At the same time, it indicates that the overall intensity of psychological defenses, social frustration, a positive body image, the degree of depression and the degree of guilt feelings among the representatives of this group are relatively lower.

Keywords: subjective well-being, adolescence, self-esteem, self-evaluation

RESUMEN:

El propósito de este estudio es identificar las características específicas y estructurales de la autoestima como un componente del bienestar subjetivo de las niñas. La relevancia de este tema se debe a la necesidad de un mecanismo de comprensión más profundo para mantener la salud psicológica, así como al desarrollo de la subjetividad en el marco de las estrategias conductuales autosuficientes. El estudio fue un método de tipo encuesta de ocho. Niñas (n = 100): estudiantes de la facultad de filología de la Universidad RUDN participaron en esta investigación. Los resultados de la investigación empírica muestran que las adolescentes con niveles más altos de autoestima tienen tasas más altas de interés propio, autocomprensión, actitud positiva global positiva, confianza en sí mismas, autoestima, otras actitudes esperadas, autoaceptación, autoconsistencia, satisfacción general con datos externos. Al mismo tiempo, indica que la intensidad general de las defensas psicológicas, la frustración social, una imagen corporal positiva, el grado de depresión y el grado de sentimiento de culpa entre los representantes de este grupo son relativamente más bajos.

Palabras clave: bienestar subjetivo, adolescencia, autoestima, autoevaluación.

1. Introduction

One of the most important processes of one's adolescence is the formation of self-awareness, driving the individual to comparing all of their aspirations and actions to the concept of self. [14] This period of adolescence is characterized by a growing dissonance between structural components of the individual's self-concept — «the real self» and the «ideal self». [2]

Self-concept in young people is generally unstructured and vaguely shaped. Their self-perception is accompanied with underlying anxiety, a feeling of a certain inner vacuum, that needs to be filled. [13] As a result, young people have a strong desire to establish interactions with individuals of their social circle, a desire to expand on their communication. Yet they also display a greater selectivity when it comes to communication and, although it might seem contradictory, a desire for solitude. [9]

Adolescent boys generally model their self-image after a generalized composite image of a peer of theirs. As they grow older, the similarities between the individual and the image grow fewer and fewer. [12]

Self-respect is one of the most crucial components of self-awareness that emerges during the adolescence period. The term has many meanings and interpretations, but it generally describes the absence of dissonance between the real and ideal selves, that results in a positive attitude towards oneself, and self-acceptance. [11]

Self-respect is the most important mental resource of an individual, having direct influence of the level of productivity in various aspects of life, from one's education to an individual's inter-personal status, communication style and professional life. [11] Adolescence doesn't just establish an individual's self-awareness, but forms the basis of a new self-attitude. A major role in this process is owed to, as per Vigotsky, a shift of the components of self-esteem inwards, as they assume new forms. [17]

A high level of self-respect is often associated with positive emotions, and vice versa. In this regard, we can safely assume that the true motive behind improving one's self-esteem lies in the desire to minimize negative emotions and maximize positive ones. [3] An individual with a high level of self-respect displays an unwavering trust in their abilities and their capability to overcome their shortcomings. Conversely, a low level of self-esteem is linked to a pronounced feeling of one's own inadequacy, that is detrimental to an individual's social capabilities and overall subjective well-being. [18]

Young people that suffer from low self-respect have a less defined self-image and self-awareness. [15] They tend to hide from others behind social masks that they try to make seem as their real self. Lowered self-respect results in heightened sensitivity and defensiveness, and causes painful aversion towards ridicule and criticism. Such individuals care a great deal about the others' negative opinion of them. [4]

The studies have established a strong correlation between an individual's self-respect and their subjective well-being. [16] It was shown that people in a somber mood underappreciate the quality of their life and are prone to negatively assess their achievements. [10] Conversely, people with high self-respect display higher levels of subjective well-being, have a more positive self-attitude, are less likely to experience depression and feelings of anxiety. They also display more positive expectations towards their future achievements and are more persistent and determined when confronted with setbacks. [1]

When it comes to gender-specific results, the latest studies have reliably shown that young girls are prone to have lower self-respect levels compared to their male counterparts, and the disparity only grows as they age. [8] It relates to girls having a harder time dealing with changes their body image undergoes during puberty. [6]

The goal of the present study is to establish the defining characteristics and structural features of self-respect as a component of subjective well-being of adolescent girls. The relevance of this topic is due to the existing need to deepen the understanding of the mechanisms maintaining the subjective well-being in adolescent girls.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The study's participants included female Russian students of the Philology Faculty of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University). The sample group included 100 people aged from 18 to 26 years, with the average age being 22 years.

2.2. Instruments

Primary data processing was done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0) software. Determination of the structural features of self-respect in adolescent girls was done using the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient.

The methodology incorporated the following: a self-attitude questionnaire (V.V. Stolin, S.R. Pantileev, I.I. Chesnokova), a questionnaire of «subjective scaling» (K.V. Ivanova); a multiple-choice questionnaire on the subject of body image (J. Jade); a questionnaire «subjective interpretation of the appearance components» (V.A. Labunskaya, E.V. Belugina); a questionnaire on the subject of one's body image (O.A. Skugarevsky and S.V. Sivukha); social frustration determination method (L.I. Wasserman); a questionnaire «Life style index» (R. Plutchik, H. Kellerman, H. R. Conte); the Dutch Eating Behaviour Questionnaire (DEBQ).

3. Results

During the planning phase of the study we put forward a hypothesis that self-respect as an integral part of the subjective well-being of adolescent girls, and that it has an inverse correlation with such characteristics as the social frustration level, the overall intensity of mental defenses, dejection intensity, and acuteness of feelings of guilt. We also postulated that the scales related to high self-esteem, self-interest, autosympathy, positive attitude from others, as well as other positive traits are in direct relationship with self-respect.

The data confirming the hypothesis is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Results of the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient analysis

Scale	Spearman coefficient (rs)	Statistical significance (p)
Self-respect	1	p = 0,001
Frustration	-0,446**	p = 0,001
Dejection	-0,482**	p = 0,001
Overall mental defense intensity	-0,285**	p = 0,001
Hypercompensation	-0,293**	p = 0,001
Repression	-0,402**	p = 0,001
Regression	-0,452**	p = 0,001
Substitution	-0,379**	p = 0,001
Guilt	-,300**	p = 0,001

Self-interest	0,507**	p = 0,001
Self-acceptance	0,559**	p = 0,001
Self-understanding	0,643**	p = 0,001
Positive self-attitude	0,848**	p = 0,001
Autosympathy	0,535**	p = 0,001
Expected external attitude	0,579**	p = 0,001
Self-confidence	0,705**	p = 0,001
Self-consistency	0,757**	p = 0,001
Overall content with one's appearance	0,414**	p = 0,001
Assessment of one's appearance	0,385**	p = 0,001
Subjective body perception	0,501**	p = 0,001
Subjective body weight perception	0,346**	p = 0,001
Subjective face perception	0,455**	p = 0,001

Let's take a look at the data related to our target parameter and the scales clarifying its characteristics. Based on the results of the analysis we determined several properties of the self-respect parameter in adolescent girls. As shown in Table 1, such personal characteristics as self-interest, self-acceptance, self-understanding, positive self-attitude, autosympathy, self-confidence, self-consistency, overall content with one's appearance, as well as subjective face and body perception display a direct correlation with self-respect. This relation is not surprising, as it had already been shown in multiple past studies. [7]

Self-respect shows an inverse relation with such characteristics as social frustration level and feelings of dejection, and also with overall intensity of mental defenses in general and their separate components, namely, hypercompensation, repression, substitution and regression.

Based on the aforementioned data we can postulate that adolescent girls that have self-respect display a pronounced proclivity towards self-study and self-reflection. They also have a tendency to constantly study elements of their inner thoughts and feelings. They are prone to meticulously assess and analyze their capabilities and components of their potential. We can also postulate that their positive self-attitude is reflected in their content with their appearance, and that it influences and forms their behavior patterns.

A positive correlation between autosympathy and self-respect shows that girls that respect themselves are prone to distinguish themselves from others, but without being self-aggrandizing. On the contrary, their positive self-perception is indicative of the wholeness and soundness of their self-concept, which is a solid foundation for an adequate and stable self-esteem.

Their inherent acceptance of themselves and their appearance and its components such as their body, weight, and face comes from a detailed assessment of their strengths and weaknesses and their acceptance. True self-acceptance is founded on constant self-improvement and personal growth. [5]

A relatively higher self-respect level entails a higher dependency on the opinions of others.

In this regard, we can assume that adolescent girls strive to conform with extrinsic expectations and become successful at it, which results in a positive correlation between the target parameter with the subjective appearance assessment.

An inverse relation of self-respect with such parameters as social frustration, dejection, feelings of guilt, an overall intensity of mental defenses, hypercompensation, repression, regression and substitution is likely indicative of the fact that the participants with higher levels of self-respect do not tend to act accusatory after making mistakes and missteps. They are less likely to feel depressed or pessimistic, less likely to find themselves in a bad mood. It is also uncharacteristic of them to display aggravation, anger, or frustration caused by inability to fulfill a substantial need. As a result, in their day-to-day life they do not require a heightened mental defense, since they do not unconsciously minimize negative experiences by repressing the causes of these experiences. Their high level of self-respect leaves no need to resort to juvenile, inadequate, and immature behavior patterns, even if they seem to be the ones guaranteeing safety and protection. The participants with high self-esteem are not prone to directing their emotions and reactions towards irrelevant objects.

4. Conclusions

Based on the conducted study we present several conclusions. Self-respect as a component of one's subjective well-being displays a strong correlation with various elements of mental health in adolescent girls. High self-respect is linked to positive self-attitude, positive outlook on the future accomplishments and greater persistence in the face of setbacks. Individuals with higher self-respect are less likely to suffer from depression and anxiety disorders.

Existing studies concerning subjective well-being are few in number and their findings are often contradictory.

The acquired results allow us to fill in the blanks in our understanding of this phenomenon, and shed the light on the role it plays in one's well-being.

Our findings show that study of the sources of self-respect, location and categorization of its structural components is a promising field for further scientific research, the results of which could facilitate the formation and maintenance of proper subjective well-being in adolescents.

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