



Research Paper

## Self Esteem: Its Effects on children's Personality Development

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### Abstract

The paper titled influence of self -esteem on children's personality development. Self-esteem is the overall of how children feel about themselves and this determines their morality. Children who have low self-esteem about themselves may likely be brainwashed to indulge in immoral acts by their school mates who have high level of self-esteem. In Islamic psychology, the term self-esteem is used to describe a person's overall subjective sense of personal worth or value. self-esteem is important because it contributes to psychological well-being, better relationships, good health, and a positive identity. High self-esteem helps children to approach life positively and set goals. It also helps them become self-motivated, confident, and successful. The most basic tasks for one's mental, emotional and social health, which begins at infancy and continues until one dies, is the construction of positive self-esteem. Moral development is the process through which children develop proper attitudes and behaviors toward other people in society, based on Islamic, social and cultural norms, rules, and laws. Children formed their judgments about moral behaviour by having to do with other children in the society, this is because they cannot think on their own and their thinking is based on knowledge acquired from the teaching of Islam through the application of psychological techniques as methods of instruction.

**Keywords:** Children, Development, Influence, Personality, Self Esteem.

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### I. Introduction

The incessant rise in crime, substance abuse and addiction, illegal sexual intercourse in the society has caused a rise in concern over morality and moral development. Therefore, parents and teachers are interested in how to raise moral children in the society. As such, moral decadence in the society especially among children is alarming. The cases of immorality in our secondary schools these days are worrisome. In a recent time, there was a case of Chrislandschool students in Lagos, who were on academic trip to Dubai, unfortunately, the students who were away all in the name of excursion found displaying high level of immorality involving both sex in unlawful sexual intercourse. A lot of reasons were put forwards as causes of these acts of indiscipline, some were of the view that parental negligence could be the reason why students involve in immorality a number of scholars put the blame on teachers. From Islamic and psychological perspective, the researchers are of the view that students' self -esteem play a very important role in moral development. Self-esteem is the overall of how one feels about himself and this contribute to one's morality. Children who have low self-esteem about themselves may likely be brainwashed to indulge in immoral acts by their school mates who have high level of self-esteem.

### Concept of Self-Esteem

In Islamic psychology, the term self-esteem is used to describe a person's overall subjective sense of personal worth or value. In other words, self-esteem may be defined as how much we appreciate and like ourselves regardless of the circumstances. Orth(2010) believed that self-esteem impacts decision-making process, relationships, emotional health, and overall well-being. It also influences motivation, as people with a healthy, positive view of themselves understand their potential and may feel inspired to take on new challenges.

According to Leary (1999), self-esteem is important because it contributes to psychological well-being, better relationships, good health, and a positive identity. Lena (2000) found that self-esteem and racial identity attitudes were positively related. High self-esteem helps us to approach life positively and set goals. It also helps us become self-motivated, confident, and successful. The most basic task for one's mental, emotional and social health, which begins in infancy and continues until one dies, is the construction of his/her positive self-esteem [(Macdonald, 1994).

### **Types of self-esteem**

Self-esteem is classified into three. These are:

- Low self-esteem. Low self-esteem enables a child to put little value on his opinions and ideas. This type of esteem focuses on child's perceived weaknesses and faults, therefore, making him to give scant credit to his skills and assets.
- Healthy self-esteem. When you have healthy self-esteem it means you have a balanced, accurate view of yourself. For instance, you have a good opinion of your abilities but recognize your flaws. When self-esteem is healthy and grounded in reality, it's hard to have too much of it. Boasting and feeling superior to others around you isn't a sign of too much self-esteem. It's more likely evidence of insecurity and low self-esteem.

### **Benefits of healthy self-esteem**

When a child values himself and has good self-esteem, he feels secured and worthwhile. He also has generally positive relationships with others and feels confident about his abilities. A child also opens to learning and feedback, which can help him acquire and master new skills.

With healthy self-esteem, children are:

- Assertive in expressing their needs and opinions
- Confident in their ability to make decisions
- Able to form secure and honest relationships — and less likely to stay in unhealthy ones
- Realistic in their expectations and less likely to be overcritical of themselves and others
- More resilient and better able to weather stress and setbacks

Self-esteem affects virtually every facet of your life. Maintaining a healthy, realistic view of yourself isn't about blowing your own horn. It's about learning to like and respect oneself — faults and all.

### **Concept of Moral Development**

Creagan (2017) views development as the process through which children develop the standards of right and wrong within their society, based on social and cultural norms, and laws. Moral development is the process through which children develop proper attitudes and behaviors toward other people in society, based on social and cultural norms, rules, and laws. One of the areas of concerns to parents is children's moral development, teaching a child to distinguish right from wrong and to behave accordingly is a goal of parenting. Piaget (1973) investigated on how children develop moral reasoning in the society and this moral reasoning helps to determine children's self-esteem. A child who reasons well without any external influence from his friends may likely have high self-esteem. Piaget (1973) rejected the idea that children learn and internalize the rules and morals of the society by given the rules and forced to obey them. He found that children formed their judgments about moral behaviour by having to do with other children in the society. Because children cannot think on their own and their thinking is based on how actions affected them or what the results of an action were. They have to listen to older people in the society and any act of intimidation from the society may lead to formation of low self-esteem which in turn affects their morality.

Kohlberg (1973) felt that moral development is a slow process and evolve over time. Kohlberg believed that the first stage of moral development out the six stages is applied to the children of up to 10 years of age and this stage is called pre-conventional level. This level is concerned with avoiding punishment and getting needs met. At this level, children who are constantly intimidated or scolded by their parents or teachers for doing sometime wrong may develop sense of low self-esteem believing they are worthless. Children need to be encouraged and advised so that they can grow up with high self-esteem. Children at this stage of moral development should be made to understand that punishment received for doing wrong is not meant to create anxiety in them but to make them correct their wrong doings which in turn helps to develop high self-esteem

### **Influence of self-concept on children's moral development**

Moral development is one of major concerns in Islamic psychology because a number of factors determines it formation. One of these factors is self-esteem and Self-esteem refers to a person's beliefs about their worth and value. It also deals with the feelings people experience that follows from their sense of worthiness or unworthiness. Self-esteem is important because it heavily influences children's choices and decisions. Self-esteem is how we value and perceive ourselves. It's based on our opinions and beliefs about

ourselves, which can sometimes feel really difficult to change. The development of self-esteem goes along with the formation of children's morality. The gradual formation of an individual's concepts of right and wrong, conscience, ethical and religious values, social attitudes, and behavior refers to as moral development. Children learn what society considered being good and bad which is important for a smoothly functioning society. A child with low self-esteem may likely be influenced by lured into immorality by his mates who have high self-esteem and this may continue until it becomes part of his personality. Moral development prevents people from acting on unchecked urges, instead considering what is right for society and good for others. Parents and teachers should embark on intensive moral education program with the aim of teaching children morally good things that will benefit the society. This will help to guide students to establish or discern their own system of values on which to base their moral decision. More so, children are taught that other children may have different values systems and that they must be tolerant of those differences to avoid conflicts among themselves. James in Harler (2017), a psychologist, wrote at the turn of the 20th century that self-esteem is based on how adequate we feel in those domains that are important to us. For children aged 8-12 there are 5 domains: scholastic competence; athletic competence; peer likeability; physical appearance and behavioral conduct. For adolescents there are 3 additional domains: romantic appeal; close friendship and job competence."Deirdre, Alan, Lawlor, and Micheal (2000) opined that the broad curriculum covers bullying and child abuse as two related forms of victimization and disclosure training, assertiveness training and coercion management training are included in the curriculum, which also focuses on enhancing self-esteem and the promotion of peer support.

High self-esteem and moral development can best be achieved through democratic way. It helps to enhance children's development of internal self-esteem and moral growth than using authoritarian or permissive system. Permissive parenting style fails to instill any control while authoritarian style instill only fear of punishment which may bring about creation of low self-esteem in children which is not a suitable deterrent. Development of high self-esteem through moral development involves a number of internal processes that are best developed via warm, caring parenting with clear and consistent expectations, emphasis on the reinforcement of positive behaviours rather than punishment of negative ones, modeling of self-esteem and moral behaviours by adults and creation of opportunities for children to practice moral reasoning and actions to avoid formation of low self-esteem. Children should be made to understand that moral behaviour and self-esteem can be motivated by the desire to satisfy a variety of personal and social goals. Self-oriented moral behaviour can help developed high self-esteem if properly guided by the parents and teachers but other-oriented moral behaviour can lead to low self-esteem because children are taught to copy other children for the development of their self-esteem and moral behaviour.

### **Believe of Islam about Morality and Self-Esteem**

The items used to express morality according to Qur'an are equality, justice, fairness, brotherhood, mercy, compassion, solidarity and freedom of choice. It is therefore, expected of teachers and parents to apply the principles of the terms in teaching and learning. The teaching and learning of the above aforementioned items also help in the formation of children's self-esteem. Take freedom of choice as an example, a child who is at liberty to express his likeness without fear of intimidation will develop self-confidence than the one under the influence of intimidation or fear. Fair judgment and equality among children irrespective of children's parental status will help promote high self-esteem in children of the poor masses and vise-versa

### **Teaching and learning of moral education in Islam**

Because of high rate of moral decadence in the society, teachers and parents have made it a point of duty to teach their children moral behaviour so that they will be useful to the society. In Islam, teaching and learning of moral education is a responsibility of all. As far as Islam is concerned, Taqwa refer to as moral values that inspire the doings of Muslim Ummahs which are guided by the almighty Allah. Islam is of the view that the best way to make children to serve God is to educate them and educating children to serve God to the best of their knowledge will help them to have high self-esteem because the knowledge and skills acquired through teaching of the words of God will make them stick to their belief irrespective of external force that may stand as stumbling block to the development of the moral behaviour and self-esteem. Islam prescribes norms and values for righteousness and good character that make up individual's body compositions regarding moral qualities and virtues. Shahid (2015)opined that fundamental reason behind Islamic morality and self-esteem is to achieve Raza-e Illahi (the pleasure of Allah). IslamReligion.com (2006)high self-esteem helps to make children stand by what they were religiously taught by their parents and teachers and it also helps to make them stick to their good moral behaviour. Morality in the sense of practical guidelines for good doing is primarily based on the Quran and Hadith that is the two central religious texts of Islam (Clark, 2011). Quran (2006) these moral virtues include kindness, charity, forgiveness, honesty, patience, justice, respecting parents and elders, keeping promises and controlling one's anger.

### **Self Esteem as Determinant of One's Life**

The fact that self-esteem affects our way of thinking and plays a vital role in the formation of our attitudes, it also affects our behaviour. Our behaviours are the products of our thoughts and self-esteem plays a vital role in determining our thoughts. These thoughts also affect those we come into contact with and this can change the way they interact with us. Others often judge us from our behaviour and actions, as they cannot know our thoughts, and this leads to comments and behavior that can hurt or help us. In other words, your level of self-esteem can create all kinds of positive or negative effects in your life. It is the positive effects that we want and so building self-esteem is a great way to help move forward to a better and happier future.

### **Shirazi suggested 6 Ways to Have Self Esteem from Islamic Point Of View.**

Here are the 6 steps of achieving self-esteem according to Islamic psychology and perspectives:

1. Believe in the divine decree. Among Muslims, you hear words like *InshaAllah*, *MashAllah*, *SubhanAllah*. What they mean is submission to Allah's will. Believing in what is already written for you will save you from hurting your self-esteem. When you say I'm going to ace that interview *inshaAllah* (if Allah wills), in case you don't ace it you will already think that I have not aced it because Allah didn't will for it. Hence believing in Allah's decisions will help you tackle sadness and rejection.

2. Strengthen friendship with Allah. Allah is the ultimate source of peace and security. His attributes from *As-Salam* (The source of peace) and *Al-Mumin* (The Affirmer) to *Al Waliy* (The friendly Lord) and *Al Wadood* (The Loving) provide serenity to a believer's heart. If your bond with Allah is strong, you won't be disheartened by His creation anymore. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in Taif said: "O Allah if you are happy with me, then everything is all good". We live to please people and people can never be pleased. Live to please Allah and Allah will make everyone and everything yours.

In order to strengthen your friendship with Allah, see who are the people that Allah loves and try to gain his love and mercies by becoming that person. Show Allah gestures that you love Him and He will love you. If the ultimate source of everything is your friend, then who else in the world can lower your self-esteem?

3. Develop a Muslim psychology. Developing Muslim psychology instead of western psychology is very important to have self-esteem. Muslim psychology constitutes postulates of being optimistic, being grateful, don't being materialistic, showing patience and gratitude (*SabarWaShukar*), and above all, omitting the habit of comparing yourself with others. The comparison may lead to Jealousy which is forbidden by Allah. Be grateful at times of happiness and be patient at times of hardships. If you don't have an optimistic approach towards life, you will become easy prey to shaitan. Build these habits with time and you will see your self-esteem and self-confidence growing.

4. Develop positive skills and habits. Developing positive habits and involving yourself in performing virtues will increase your self-esteem. Remember that sins decrease self-esteem. The more you do sins, you will ultimately feel low, you won't see yourself speaking or expressing yourself properly, your mindfulness will get affected. Hence, develop a habit of helping others, develop a habit of complimenting others, develop a habit of speaking the truth. Spread positivity and positivity will reflect back to you.

5. Always be in a good company. Having good company is one of the most important aspects of having self-esteem. If your company is bad, you are spending your day with people who don't talk about the good in life, who are always being funny and never discuss. It is wisely said, if a person sits with another person who is wearing perfume, then, ultimately the smell of perfume will start coming out of him too. If a person sits in a coal mine, he will blacken himself and his clothes as well.

6. Be hygienic. Being hygienic and clean is half of a believer's Imaan. Some people are not very attractive or exceptionally beautiful from Allah, but they keep themselves in a good manner, wear clean clothes and take care of their hygiene. Ultimately they gain more confidence and higher self-esteem. Allah calls the believers to pray salah 5 times a day, hence making ablution 5 times becomes mandatory. This is a great practice in terms of *deen* and *duniya* both.

### **Factors that shape and influence self-esteem**

It is very important for both parents and teachers to be wishful during children's developmental stages because during these stages children's self-esteem is formed and it continues to grow until it is fully developed to the level where it may be difficult to reverse. Parents and teachers are strongly advised to help in building high self-esteem so that it will help in the development of their moral development without the influence of any external forces. Relationships with parents, siblings, peers, teachers and other important contacts are contributing factors to the development of self-esteem. The formation of self-esteem begins at early childhood and it includes but not limited to: thoughts and perceptions, reaction of other people to you, Experiences at home, school work and in the community, Illness, disability or injury. The feedback a child receives from his friends helps to determine his self-esteem, a child who receives positive feedback from his friends may likely

see himself as worthwhile and have healthier self-esteem but if otherwise the child may likely struggle with poor self-esteem. Parents and teachers should endeavour to make children understand that their past experiences should not be used as a yard stick to judge their future. They should be made to understand that their own thoughts have the biggest influence on the formation of their self-esteem and these thoughts are under their control. Focusing on one's areas of weaknesses will help a long way to enhance one's self-esteem.

Self-esteem is shaped by your thoughts, relationships and experiences. Understand the range of self-esteem and the benefits of having a healthy opinion of yourself.

Self-esteem is your overall opinion of yourself — how you feel about your abilities and limitations. When you have healthy self-esteem, you feel good about yourself and see yourself as deserving the respect of others. When you have low self-esteem, you put little value on your opinions and ideas. You might constantly worry that you aren't good enough. Children should be made to understand that self-esteem fluctuates depending on the age and sometimes it depends on the situation one finds himself.

Self-esteem tends to fluctuate over time, depending on your circumstances. It's normal to go through times when you feel down about yourself and times when you feel good about yourself. Generally, however, self-esteem stays in a range that reflects how you feel about yourself overall, and increases slightly with age.

## **II. Conclusion**

Development and formation of moral behaviour and high self-esteem in children depend largely on the teaching and learning of rules and regulations set aside by Islamic injunctions. Self-esteem contributes to psychological well-being, better relationships, good health, and a positive identity that helps in the development of children's self-esteem. High self-esteem helps children to approach life positively and set goals that will help them to become self-motivated and confident. High level of self-esteem in children enables them to feel secure and worthwhile and at the same time enhance their personal good moral behaviour without any peer group influence. Equality, justice, fairness, brotherhood, mercy, compassion, solidarity and freedom of choice are terms used in the Quran to describe moral behaviour, therefore, teachers and parents are strongly advised to use these virtues during children's moral development.

## **III. Recommendations**

1. Government should introduce the teaching and learning of moral education at primary and secondary school levels.
2. Government should allow Islamic scholars to partake in the teaching of moral education in primary and secondary schools.
3. Children should be advised by their parents and teachers not to be too submissive and gullible to their friends as failure to comply may result to low self-esteem.
4. During children's moral development, virtue like freedom of choice should be well developed as it will help enhance children's self-esteem.

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