Self-Esteem and Interpersonal Relationship of Pre-Service Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between self-esteem and interpersonal relationship among pre-service teachers in higher education. The study was guided by two research questions, two hypotheses, self-identity theory (Stryker 1980), social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The sample size was 166, obtained from total number of level 300 students from the Department of Health Physical Education and Recreation, and Department of Mathematics and ICT under the Faculty of Science and Technology Education. The department of Health Physical Education and Recreation level 300 had total number of students to be 38 and department of Mathematics and ICT level 300 had total student of 124, given a total sample size to be 166. The results of the study are based on 152 out of 166, which constitutes a response rate of 91.6%. Questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondents. The data collected from the respondents were analysed using frequencies and percentages, mean and standard deviations, independent samples t-test, and simple linear regression using 1000 bootstrap samples with Bias Corrected accelerated confidence intervals. The study revealed the following findings: 1) the majority of the respondents experience low self-esteem, 2) The respondents, on average, demonstrate a moderate level of interpersonal relationship engagement, 3) there was no statistically significant relationship between self-esteem and interpersonal relationship and 4) a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of self-esteem between male and female students with male students having lower self-esteem than females. In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of tailored interventions, like orientation programs and seminars, to enhance self-esteem, especially among male pre-service teachers. It also underscores the complex link between self-esteem and interpersonal relationship.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Interpersonal Relationship, College of Education Studies, Academic Performance.

INTRODUCTION

Students are at a stage in their growth where recognition and a sense of belonging attained through harmonious relationships within their peer group become critical factors (Lee, 2008). It is a well-known fact that humans need interaction with others in their immediate environment in a social context. The nature and environment in which we live largely determines the intensiveness of our interaction and interrelationship. The greater the interpersonal interaction, the more a person becomes more human, better adjusted, and more exposed to increasing number of conflicts (Ayodele, 2010; Hammed, 2003). Interpersonal relationship is a strong, deep, or close association or acquaintance between two or more people that may range in duration (Zahran,2020; Redon, 1887). This association may be based on inference, love, solidarity, support, regular business interactions, or some other type of social commitment (Redon, 1887). Interpersonal relationships thrive through equitable and reciprocal compromise, formed in the context of social, cultural and other influences. Relationship quality is a key indicator of individual psychosocial adjustment (Chan & Rawana, 2021).

Global self-esteem, as the general evaluative attitude that we take towards ourselves, is very much a social psychological construct: it is rooted in social interaction, and it develops hand in hand with our interpersonal relations (Kiviruusu et al., 2016). Early social psychologists like Charles Horton Cooley have pointed out

the looking-glass nature of our self-view, thus emphasizing the importance of other people's views to our self-concept (Dianne, 1992; Kiviruusu et al., 2016). In recent years there has been an increasing number of studies on self-esteem development using individual change trajectories covering the years from adolescence to adulthood, as well as up to old ages (Galambos et al., 2006; Kiviruusu et al., 2015). These studies have indicated a relatively consistent developmental pattern where self-esteem increases from adolescence to young adulthood, continues to increase, although more slowly, during mid-adulthood, and turns to a decreasing trajectory around the 50s or 60s. Some of these studies have also addressed the question of how interpersonal factors shape the self-esteem trajectory during the life course (Kiviruusu et al., 2016; Orth et al., 2010). Self-esteem could occur when adults build students up by overinflating their achievements (Bell, 2009; Kohn, 1994). Kohn added that this practice makes students feel good, but this exaggeration is a shortcoming to the natural process of motivation and self-esteem building (1994). Some students tend to think of themselves too highly, which can negatively affect their motivation by giving them a false sense of achievement (Covington, 1984).

Research indicates that body self-esteem and an individual's perception surrounding this are integral in the development of a variety of social relationships (Kleck & Strenta, 1980). Self-esteem is a very important element for living a happy life. Rosenberg and Farrell (1976) argued that typically self-esteem resulting from elements of inner image, particularly a desire to think better of oneself is the driving force of self-behaviour and is thus a leading indicator of psychological well-being. Ervin and Stryker (2001) began the process by discussing the links between self-esteem, identity salience, and identity commitment (embeddedness of individuals within the social structure). The connections between the different conceptualizations of self-esteem, however, remain unclear. Their research presented here attempts to synthesize the views on self-esteem by focusing on the vital role that self-esteem plays in the process of self-verification within groups. According to their self-identity theory, the self is composed of multiple identities that reflect the various social positions that an individual occupies in the larger social structure. Meanings in an identity reflect an individual's conception of himself or herself as an occupant of that position or "self-in-role" (Stryker, 1980).

A Theory of Self-esteem on the social structure that has traditionally characterized the structural symbolic interactionist position (Stryker, 1980). The verification of an identity produces feelings of competency and worth, increasing self-esteem. When individuals can verify group-based identities by altering or maintaining meanings in the situation that match the meanings in their identities, self-esteem increases through such efficacious action. Verification of group-based identities is also likely to produce self-esteem since confirmation of identities within the group signifies approval and acceptance of the self (Burke & Stets, 1999). It is further suggested that self-esteem works as a type of defense mechanism. In protecting the self against distress while the situation is "resolved" (Thoits, 1994), however, self-esteem is used up or diminished. Thus, self-esteem is analogous to a "reservoir of energy." Like any other resource, self-esteem can be built up, but when unused, it is lost. Finally, it is suggested that people seek to maintain or increase their self-esteem by creating "opportunity structures" or contexts for self-verification (Swann, 1983, 1990). People seek opportunities (and the groups that provide them) to verify their identities and avoid situations (and groups) where self-verification is problematic. Such efforts help individuals manage and maintain their self-esteem. In this way self-esteem can be viewed as a self-motive, organizing and providing direction for behaviour.

Levinger (1980) postulates that interpersonal relationships are governed by perceptions of the rewards and costs of interactions. Basically, this model predicts that interactions between acquaintances, friends, and lovers are likely to continue if the participants feel that the benefits and the drive from the relationship are reasonable in comparison with the costs (Kelly & Thibaunt, 1978). This standard of what constitutes an acceptable balance of rewards and costs in a relationship is referred to as your comparison level. It is based on the outcomes you have experienced in previous relationships and the outcomes you have seen other experiences in their relationships. Your comparison level may also be influenced by your exposure to

fictional relationships, such as those you have read about or seen on television. In accordance with the predictions of exchange theory, research indicates that satisfaction in a relationship is high.

Xu, Yang, MacLeod and Zhu researched on Interpersonal communication competence (ICC) and digital citizenship among pre-service teachers in China's teacher preparation programs (2019). This emphasized the importance of ICC skills in mediated behaviour thus providing a practical guide for improving pre-service teachers' digital citizenship. Bedel and Emine Ferda (2016) explored academic motivation, academic self-efficacy, and attitudes toward teaching in pre-service early childhood education teachers. Other researchers also look at the relationship between self-assessment and self-efficacy among pre-service science teachers (Nurcan, 2013), changes in self-efficacy perceptions, professional self-esteem, and attitudes toward the teaching profession of pre-service information technology teachers in accordance with their academic achievement and career choices (Ozcan, 2019), enhancing pre-service teachers' socio-emotional competence (Aspelin, 2019), the structural relationships among college students' adaptation to college, adult attachment, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships (Eunsil, 2015), the relationship between self-esteem and interpersonal difficulties of college students and the role of self-concept in that relationship (Luo et. al., 2021), the impact of interpersonal relationship and self-esteem on problematic Internet use among adolescents, young and older adults of Multan City (Ruqia et al., 2018), the effects of self-esteem and interpersonal relationship abilities on department satisfaction in the dental hygiene students (Lee et al., 2014). From the foregoing, there seems to be no research on the correlation between self-esteem and interpersonal relationship regarding pre-service students in Ghana.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of self-esteem of pre-service teachers?
2. What is the level of interpersonal relationships of pre-service teachers?

Research hypotheses

1. H_{O1}: There is no significant difference in the level of self-esteem of pre-service teachers in terms of gender.
2. H_{O2}: There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and interpersonal relationship of pre-service teachers.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Descriptive survey design, according to Amedahe and Gyimah (2003), makes use of various data collection techniques involving interviews, questionnaires, and attitude scales. The sample size was 152 third-year pre-service students from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. A simple random sampling procedure was used to select the respondents for the study.

Additionally, the questionnaire was the instrument utilised for data collection. Rosenberg (Rosenberg, 1979) self-esteem scale was adapted to collect data for self-esteem and the relationship scales questionnaire was also adapted in collecting data for interpersonal relationships (Griffin & Bartholomew,1994). This 10-item scale assesses an individual's feelings of self-worth when the individual compares himself or herself to other people. The self-esteem scale was designed to represent a continuum of self-worth, with statements that are endorsed by individuals with low self-esteem to statements that are endorsed only by persons with high self-esteem. Response categories were anchored on a four–point Likert scale response format, ranging from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1) for positively worded items and strongly disagree (4) to strongly agree (1) for negatively worded items. A higher score indicated greater self-esteem. The interpersonal relationship scale contained 30 short statements and it was measured on a four-point Likert scale from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1).

In analysing the data, frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used for answering the research questions while t-test and regression were used to test the research hypothesis. The analysis was carried out with Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS 23.0).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1

What is the level of self-esteem of pre-service teachers?

This research question sought to determine the level of self-esteem among students. Respondents were asked to respond to 10 items and their responses are presented in Table 1. A criterion mean of 2.5 was used as the basis for the judgment of the responses. Items with mean scores above 2.5 depict agree, whereas items with mean below 2.5 depict disagree.

Table 1: Self-esteem Measures

Statement	M	SD
Overall, I am satisfied with myself	3.80	0.94
At times I think I am no good at all	2.71	1.02
I feel that I have several good qualities	3.45	0.69
I can do things as well as most other people	1.55	0.76
I feel like I do not have much to be proud of	1.78	1.00
I certainly feel useless at times	3.11	0.96
I feel that I'm a person of worth	1.56	0.80
I feel I would have more respect for myself	1.55	0.78
All in all, I'm inclined to think that I am no failure	3.55	0.77
I take a positive attitude towards myself	1.45	0.80

(n = 152)

M – Mean; SD – Standard deviation; mean of means=2.48

As shown in Table 1, respondents agreed that overall, they are satisfied with themselves (M = 3.80, SD = .94), they agreed that they think they are no good at all (M = 2.71, SD = 1.02), and they felt that they have several good qualities (M=3.45, SD=.69). Again, when asked whether they can do things as well as most other people, the respondents disagreed (M=1.55, SD=.76) and they also felt that they have much to be proud of (M=1.78, SD=1.00).

Additionally, the respondents strongly agreed that they certainly feel useless at times (M=3.11, SD=.96), they are people of no worth (M=1.56, SD=.80), they would have less respect for themselves (M=1.55, SD=.78), and overall, they are highly inclined to think that they are no failure (M=3.55, SD=.77).

Generally, respondents had low self-esteem. Self-esteem refers most generally to an individual's overall positive evaluation of the self (Gecas, 1982; Orth & Robins, 2022; Rosenberg, 1990; Rosenberg et al., 1995). It is composed of two distinct dimensions, competence and worth (Gecas, 1982; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983). The competence dimension (efficacy-based self-esteem) refers to the degree to which people see themselves as capable and efficacious. The worth dimension (worth-based self-esteem) refers to the degree

to which individuals feel they are persons of value. Baumeister, Smart and Boden (1996) suggested that people with high self-esteem are more likely to be conceited, arrogant, or occasionally narcissistic. They expect to receive positive evaluations from others; if they are provided with negative feedback, a threatened ego motivates them to spend personal resources on coping with the negative evaluations. In this study, however, respondents did not exhibit signs of arrogance and narcissism, which means they were low on self-esteem. Neff (2011) pointed out that the pursuit of high self-esteem can be problematic, can sometimes be counterproductive, and may involve puffing the self-up while putting others down. High scores on self-esteem scales can result from narcissism – a highly inflated, grandiose view of oneself and one's positive traits and competence, conjoined with a sense of entitlement.

Research Question 2

What is the level of interpersonal relationships among Pre-Service teachers?

This research question sought to determine the level of interpersonal relationships among students. Respondents were asked to respond to items on relationship and their responses are presented in Table 2. Mean scores were computed for the responses, which ranged from 1 to 4, where scores close to 4 depict difficulty in building relationships with others; scores close to 1 depict the ability to form happy and productive relationships with others and 3 depict moderate difficulty in building relationships.

Table 2: Interpersonal Relationship Engagement

Statement	M	SD
I find it difficult to depend on others	3.38	1.54
I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others	3.05	1.43
I worry about being alone	2.68	1.29
I often worry that romantic partners don't really love me and won't want to stay with me	2.47	1.44
I find it difficult to trust others completely	3.47	1.45
I worry about others getting too close to me	2.47	1.37
I find it easy to get emotionally close to others	2.88	1.43
I am happy working with others in a study group	3.57	1.55
I always want to have a roommate	3.04	1.53
People are never there when you need them	2.94	1.30
My desire to merge completely sometimes scares people away	2.13	1.28

(n = 152)

M – Mean; *SD* – Standard deviation; Mean of means= 2.92

The results in Table 2 show that respondents find it difficult to depend on others (M = 3.38, SD = 1.54), they worry that they will be hurt if they allow themselves to become close to others (M = 3.05, SD = 1.43), they moderately worry about being alone (M = 2.68, SD = 1.29). They also often worry, moderately, that their romantic partners do not really love them (M=2.47, SD=1.44). Moreover, the respondents further indicated they find it difficult to trust others completely (M = 3.47, SD = 1.45), they find it moderately difficult about others getting close to them (M = 2.47, SD = 1.37), They have moderate difficulty to get emotionally close to others (M=2.88, SD=1.43), and they are happy working with others in a study group (M = 3.57, SD = 1.55).

The respondents, on average, demonstrate a moderate level of interpersonal relationship engagement. They have varying levels of difficulty or worry regarding dependence on others, fear of being hurt, fear of being alone, and trust in others. However, they generally express happiness in working with others in a study group. The mean of means (2.92) suggests a moderate inclination towards seeking companionship and engaging in relationships with others. It appears that while they may have concerns and reservations, they do value and seek social interactions, as evidenced by their happiness in group study situations.

These findings were explained by the social exchange theory. The theory postulates that interpersonal relationship is governed by perceptions of the rewards and cost of interactions. Basically, this model predicts that interactions between acquaintances, friends, and lovers are likely to continue if the participants feel that the benefits, they drive from the relationship are reasonable in comparison with the costs (Kelley & Thibaunt, 1978). It was found in this study that respondents felt comfortable associating with friends since they could help them in doing other things. In a similar vein, the social comparison theory suggests that students are more likely to associate themselves with students who are placed at the same academic level, thereby more likely to see themselves as equal to those peers from an academic standpoint as well as a self-esteem or self-worth standpoint. Students who are given a special class placement are associated with an increase in academic self-concept.

Hypothesis 1

HO$_1$: There is no significant difference in the level of self-esteem of pre-service teachers in terms of gender.

The aim of this hypothesis was to determine the differences in the level of self-esteem between male and female students. In order to test this hypothesis, an independent samples t-test was performed to compare the mean scores for males and females. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3: Independent Samples t-test comparing the Level of Self-esteem by Gender.

	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig.
Male	78	30.19	4.09			
				150	-2.17	.031*
Female	74	31.68	4.33			

*Significant at .05 level; eta squared = .03

The result in Table 3 indicates a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of self-esteem between male and female students, t (150) = -2.17, p = .031. This result implies that males (M = 30.19, SD = 4.09) have lower self-esteem compared to females (M = 31.68, SD = 4.33). The magnitude of the difference was small, eta squared = .03.

Hypothesis 2

HO$_2$: There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and interpersonal relationship among students.

This hypothesis sought to examine the relationship between self-esteem and interpersonal relationship among pre-service students. Simple linear regression analysis using 1000 bootstrap samples with Bias Corrected accelerated confidence intervals was performed to determine the relationship between self-esteem and interpersonal relationship. The predictor variable (self-esteem) was measured on a scale and the criterion variable (interpersonal relationship) was also measured on a continuous basis. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Relationship between Self-esteem and Interpersonal Relationship

| Model | B | Bootstrap[a] | | | | |
| | | Bias | Std. Error | Sig. (2-tailed) | 95% Confidence Interval | |
					Lower	Upper
(Constant)	32.971	0.198	4.043	0.001	25.419	41.809
Self-esteem	-0.048	-0.007	0.131	0.698	-0.331	0.192

1. Dependent Variable: interpersonal relationship; R^2 = .001

The results in Table 4 shows a statistically non-significant relationship between self-esteem and interpersonal relationship, B = -.048, Boot BCa (-.33, .19). This implies that even though the relationship between the two variables is negative, it was however not significant. Self-esteem explained 1% of the variance in interpersonal relationship. This effect is very small. The negative relationship suggests that higher self-esteem is linked to a reduced dependence on others; thus, they are not likely to depend on others.

The findings of this study disagree with several authors (Berscheid, 1985; Robertson, 2009; Giesler, Swann & Stein-seroussi, 1992). Berscheid (1985) found that self-esteem influences the way we relate to others. Individuals with low self-esteem tend to take negative feedback to hate more than people with high self-esteem. The current study found no significant relationship between self-esteem and interpersonal relationship. This shows that irrespective of an individual's level of self-esteem, it is not likely to determine his/her relationship with others. On the contrary, Swann, Stein-seroussi and Giesler, found that one outcome of a desire for self-esteem is that people tend to choose interaction partners with those who see them as they see themselves. In another study, Robertson (2009) found that there is evidence of a correlation between self-esteem and both peer and romantic relationships among students. This was in line with previous research, in which self-esteem has been associated with one's interpersonal connectedness where those with higher levels of self-esteem also reported greater quality of relationships with peers and romantic partners.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this study underscores the necessity for targeted interventions and programmes such as effective orientation exercises in the form of presentations or seminars to bolster self-esteem, particularly among male pre-service teachers, and emphasises the intricate interconnections between self-esteem and interpersonal relationship dynamics. Addressing self-esteem concerns and promoting supportive environments may facilitate enhanced interpersonal engagement, ultimately fostering more resilient and confident future educators. Further research and interventions in this domain are warranted to construct a comprehensive understanding and develop strategies to improve the self-esteem and effectiveness of pre-service teachers. Based on the findings, it is recommended that academic counsellors are entreated to offer counselling services to students to build their level of self-esteem (how they value themselves) and interpersonal relationship (how they interact with others) of pre-service teachers.

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