

Relationship of Demographic Variables, Self-Esteem and English Language Confidence in a Multicultural Classroom Context of College Freshmen

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ABSTRACT

Self-esteem is the reverence for one's self, relates to the values, beliefs, and attitudes people hold about themselves. It is closely linked to traits such as strong will, self-confidence, decision-making abilities, originality, creativity, and mental health. These factors contribute to a sense of self-worth, overall well-being, and an individual's ability to cope with academic and social challenges. Self-confidence is key to healthy psychological adjustment, personal happiness, and effective functioning in both children and adults. This research study aimed to describe the relationships among demographic factors, self-esteem, and English language self-confidence of first-year college students in the context of a multicultural classroom. Specifically, it examined whether demographic variables were associated with students' self-esteem and English language self-confidence, as well as the relationship between the two psychological constructs. Using a stratified sampling technique, 323 students participated in an online survey. This study utilized the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) and the English Anxiety and Self-Confidence Questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, specifically Spearman's rho, Kruskal-Wallis, and Mann-Whitney U tests. The findings showed that most first-year students at the participant school had average self-esteem, but nearly half reported feeling unconfident when using English. Self-esteem was significantly associated with students' age and the type of high school they attended, while age and gender were found to influence English language self-confidence. Furthermore, there was a weak but statistically significant positive relationship between self-esteem and English language self-confidence. These findings may help English teachers develop instructional strategies and supportive classroom environments that foster both self-esteem and confidence in using English among first-year college students.

Keywords: Self-esteem, English language self-confidence, First-year college students, Multicultural classroom, Demographic factors

INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem plays a significant role in an individual's psychological well-being, influencing personal development, academic achievement, and social interaction. It reflects how individuals evaluate their own worth and capabilities and is associated with positive traits such as self-confidence, resilience, motivation, and effective decision-making. Students with healthy self-esteem are generally more willing to participate in classroom activities, cope with academic challenges, and engage in meaningful social relationships (Rosenberg (1965). In higher education, self-esteem becomes particularly important as students adjust to new academic demands and social environments.

English language self-confidence is another important psychological factor that affects students' willingness to communicate and their success in language learning. Previous studies have shown that learners with greater confidence are more likely to participate in classroom discussions, practice speaking, and develop stronger language proficiency (Orth et al., 2010). Conversely, low confidence may contribute to communication anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and reduced classroom participation, ultimately limiting opportunities for language development. These findings support the view that language learning is influenced not only by cognitive ability but also by learners' psychological characteristics (Abdulghani et al.,2020).

Existing literature has consistently reported a positive relationship between self-esteem and language confidence. Studies conducted among international and university students suggest that individuals with higher self-esteem tend to demonstrate greater confidence in using English and experience better psychological adjustment in multicultural learning environments. Other researchers have likewise reported that demographic characteristics, including age, educational background, and gender, may influence both self-esteem and language confidence, although the consistency of these relationships varies across different cultural contexts.

Despite the growing body of international research, local studies examining the relationship between self-esteem and English language self-confidence remain limited, particularly among Filipino first-year college students in multicultural educational settings. Most previous Philippine studies have focused primarily on English proficiency or speaking performance, with less attention given to the psychological factors that influence students' confidence in using the language. Moreover, few studies have simultaneously examined demographic characteristics, self-esteem, and English language self-confidence within a single analytical framework.

First-year students represent a particularly important population because the transition from senior high school to college often involves significant academic, social, and psychological adjustments. These changes may affect both students' perceptions of themselves and their confidence in communicating in English. Understanding these relationships may help educators identify students who require additional academic and psychological support during their first year of higher education.

Therefore, this study examined the relationship between demographic characteristics, self-esteem, and English language self-confidence among first-year students enrolled at City College of Angeles. Specifically, it determined whether selected demographic variables were associated with students' self-esteem and English language self-confidence and investigated the relationship between these two psychological constructs. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on language learning and provide evidence that may guide English teachers, guidance counselors, curriculum developers, and higher education institutions in developing interventions that strengthen both students' self-esteem and confidence in using English.

Although previous studies have examined self-esteem and English language confidence separately, relatively few have investigated how these constructs interact among Filipino first-year college students in multicultural higher education settings. Furthermore, evidence remains limited regarding whether demographic characteristics influence these psychological variables within the Philippine context. Addressing these gaps is important because the transition to college represents a critical period in which students develop both academic identity and confidence in using English.

Therefore, this study examined the relationships among demographic characteristics, self-esteem, and English language self-confidence among first-year students enrolled at City College of Angeles. By identifying the demographic factors associated with these variables and examining the relationship between self-esteem and English language self-confidence, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on language learning psychology in multicultural higher education contexts and provides evidence that may inform student support programs and English language instruction.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationships among demographic characteristics, self-esteem, and English language self-confidence of first-year college students in a multicultural classroom setting. A descriptive-correlational design is appropriate for determining the extent to which variables are associated without manipulating the study environment or establishing causal relationships. Specifically, the study investigated whether selected demographic variables were significantly associated with self-esteem and English language self-confidence and whether a relationship existed between these two psychological constructs.

Participants

The participants consisted of 323 first-year college students enrolled at City College of Angeles during the Academic Year 2023–2024. Students represented twelve academic programs, including Accountancy, Entrepreneurship, Tourism Management, Computer Science, Library and Information Science, Information Systems, English Language Studies, Physical Education, Mathematics, Special Needs Education, Psychology, and Technical-Vocational Teacher Education. The sample was selected from a population of 2,040 freshmen using stratified random sampling, ensuring proportional representation from each academic program. Sample size determination was based on Cochran's formula with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

Research instruments

Data were collected using three sections of a structured questionnaire. The first section obtained participants' demographic information, including age, sex, ethnicity, type of senior high school attended, learning modality during senior high school, and current academic program.

Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) developed by Rosenberg (1965). The instrument consists of ten items rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The RSES has been extensively used in psychological research and has demonstrated strong reliability and validity across diverse populations.

English language self-confidence was measured using the English Anxiety and Self-Confidence Questionnaire originally developed by Clément et al. (2003) and adapted by Field, as cited in Wang (2009). The questionnaire contains twelve items assessing learners' confidence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English using a five-point Likert scale. Previous studies have reported excellent internal consistency for the instrument (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$). Prior to the main data collection, the questionnaire underwent pilot testing involving twenty first-year college students who were excluded from the final sample. Reliability analysis confirmed the internal consistency of the research instruments before administration.

Data collection procedure

After obtaining approval from the institutional research office and permission from the participating institution, data were collected from March 25 to April 5, 2024. Ethical clearance was secured before the administration of the survey. The questionnaires were distributed electronically through Google Forms, allowing participants to complete the survey voluntarily at their convenience. Before participation, respondents received an informed consent form explaining the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw at any stage of the research. The study complied with the provisions of the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012, and all collected data were securely stored and treated with strict confidentiality.

Data analysis

Data were encoded, cleaned, and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, medians, and interquartile ranges, were used to summarize participants' demographic characteristics, self-esteem, and English language self-confidence. Inferential analyses were conducted at a 0.05 significance level. The Mann–Whitney U test was employed to examine differences between two independent groups, while the Kruskal–Wallis test was used to compare three or more independent groups. The relationship between self-esteem and English language self-confidence was determined using Spearman's rank-order correlation (Spearman's rho). Correlation coefficients were interpreted using the guidelines proposed by Dancey and Reidy (2004).

RESULTS

Participant characteristics

A total of 323 first-year college students participated in the study. Most participants were 19 years old and below (64.4%), while 29.7% were between 20 and 23 years old, and 5.9% were 24 years old and above. Female students

comprised the majority of the respondents (62.5%), whereas 37.5% were male. In terms of ethnicity, Kapampangan students represented the largest group (49.2%), followed by Tagalog students (38.7%). The remaining participants identified with various ethnic groups, including Bisaya, Waray, Ilocano, Maranao, Pangasinense, Bicolano, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, and Ilonggo.

Most respondents graduated from public senior high schools (77.1%), while 22.9% completed their senior high school education in private institutions. Regarding learning modality during senior high school, 52.0% attended face-to-face classes, 37.5% experienced blended learning, and 10.5% participated in online learning. Participants represented twelve academic programs, with the largest proportions enrolled in Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (18.0%), Bachelor of Science in Computer Science (15.2%), and Bachelor of Science in Psychology (13.0%).

Levels of self-esteem and English language self-confidence

The majority of participants (57.9%) demonstrated normal self-esteem, while 30.3% exhibited low self-esteem and 11.8% showed high self-esteem. The median self-esteem score was 2, with an interquartile range of ± 1 , indicating that participants' responses were generally concentrated within the normal range.

Regarding English language self-confidence, 47.7% of the participants reported low confidence, followed by 37.5% with normal confidence. Additionally, 11.5% demonstrated extremely low confidence, whereas only 3.1% and 0.3% reported high and extremely high levels of confidence, respectively. The median confidence score was 2, with an interquartile range of ± 1 , indicating that the overall level of English language self-confidence among participants ranged from low to normal.

Differences in self-esteem and English language self-confidence according to demographic characteristics

The Kruskal–Wallis and Mann–Whitney U tests were conducted to determine whether participants' self-esteem differed according to their demographic characteristics. The results indicated statistically significant differences in self-esteem based on age ($p = .050$) and type of senior high school graduated from ($p = .045$). No statistically significant differences were observed according to sex ($p = .208$), ethnicity ($p = .097$), learning modality during senior high school ($p = .221$), or current academic program ($p = .356$).

Similarly, differences in English language self-confidence were examined using the Kruskal–Wallis and Mann–Whitney U tests. Statistically significant differences were found according to age ($p = .036$) and sex ($p = .011$). However, no statistically significant differences were found with respect to ethnicity ($p = .546$), type of senior high school graduated from ($p = .247$), learning modality during senior high school ($p = .276$), or current academic program ($p = .094$).

Relationship between self-esteem and English language self-confidence

Spearman's rank-order correlation was performed to examine the relationship between self-esteem and English language self-confidence. The analysis revealed a weak positive correlation between the two variables with the $r_s = .141$, $p = .012$, indicating a statistically significant association between participants' self-esteem and their English language self-confidence.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationships among demographic characteristics, self-esteem, and English language self-confidence among first-year college students in a multicultural higher education setting. The findings provide evidence that demographic characteristics and psychological factors are associated with students' confidence in using English, highlighting the importance of considering both personal and educational contexts in language learning.

Most participants demonstrated normal self-esteem, indicating that they generally maintained a positive perception of themselves despite the academic and social adjustments associated with the transition to college. Nevertheless, nearly one-third of the participants exhibited low self-esteem, suggesting that a substantial

proportion of first-year students may experience uncertainty regarding their self-worth. This finding is consistent with the study of Obenza et al. (2024), which reported that most Filipino college students possessed average levels of self-esteem. However, it differs from Hernandez (2017), who found generally high self-esteem among Filipino first-year college students. These variations may reflect differences in institutional environments, student populations, and the social and academic experiences encountered across higher education institutions.

In contrast, English language self-confidence was generally low among the participants, with nearly half reporting low confidence and only a small proportion demonstrating high confidence. Although English serves as one of the official languages of the Philippines and is widely used in education, many students continue to experience uncertainty when communicating in English. This finding supports previous studies indicating that language confidence does not necessarily develop alongside language exposure and that psychological factors, including communication anxiety and fear of making mistakes, may influence students' willingness to use English (Tolentino, 2020). The findings also differ from those reported by Jallorina (2017), suggesting that English language confidence may vary across educational contexts and learner populations.

The analyses further demonstrated that age and type of senior high school graduated from were significantly associated with self-esteem. These findings suggest that developmental maturity and previous educational experiences may contribute to differences in students' perceptions of self-worth. Older students may have developed greater self-awareness and coping skills through additional academic and social experiences (Erikson, 1985). Similarly, previous educational experiences may shape students' confidence through differences in learning environments, available resources, and academic preparation. These findings are consistent with those of Eremie and Amadi (2015), who reported that school context and educational experiences may influence students' perceptions of self-worth and overall self-esteem.

With respect to English language self-confidence, only age and sex demonstrated statistically significant differences, whereas ethnicity, academic program, learning modality, and type of senior high school did not. The influence of age may reflect developmental changes in communication skills and self-perception as students mature and gain greater academic experience. The observed difference according to sex suggests that male and female students may differ in their perceptions of confidence when using English, although the present study did not investigate the underlying causes of these differences. The absence of significant differences across ethnicity, academic program, learning modality, and school type indicates that English language self-confidence appears to be relatively consistent across these demographic groups within the participant institution.

Finally, the study identified a weak but statistically significant positive relationship between self-esteem and English language self-confidence. Although the magnitude of the relationship was modest, the findings suggest that students with higher self-esteem tend to report greater confidence in using English. This supports theories emphasizing the role of self-perception in language learning and aligns with previous research demonstrating that learners with positive self-evaluations are generally more willing to communicate, participate in classroom activities, and engage in language learning opportunities. The relatively weak correlation also indicates that English language self-confidence is influenced by multiple factors beyond self-esteem, including prior language experiences, classroom environment, instructional practices, motivation, and communication anxiety.

Taken together, these findings underscore the importance of addressing both psychological well-being and language confidence in higher education. While most freshmen exhibited healthy levels of self-esteem, the prevalence of low English language self-confidence suggests a need for instructional approaches that encourage active language use within supportive classroom environments. Creating opportunities for meaningful communication, providing constructive feedback, and promoting positive classroom interactions may help strengthen students' confidence while supporting their overall academic adjustment during the transition to college.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationships among demographic characteristics, self-esteem, and English language self-confidence among first-year college students in a multicultural higher education setting. The findings revealed that most participants exhibited normal levels of self-esteem, whereas English language self-confidence

generally ranged from low to normal. Significant differences in self-esteem were observed according to age and type of senior high school graduated from, while English language self-confidence differed significantly according to age and sex. Furthermore, a weak but statistically significant positive relationship was identified between self-esteem and English language self-confidence, suggesting that students with more positive self-perceptions tend to report greater confidence in using English.

These findings highlight the important role of psychological factors in students' language learning experiences. Although self-esteem alone does not fully explain English language self-confidence, the positive association between the two variables indicates that strengthening students' self-perceptions may contribute to greater confidence in academic communication. The results also suggest that demographic characteristics should be considered when designing student support initiatives, particularly during the transition from senior high school to higher education.

The study contributes to the limited body of Philippine research examining the relationship between self-esteem and English language self-confidence within a multicultural college environment. The findings provide empirical evidence that may assist English language educators, guidance counselors, and higher education institutions in developing learner-centered instructional strategies and student support programs that promote both psychological well-being and confidence in English language use. Such initiatives may help foster more inclusive learning environments that encourage active participation, meaningful communication, and successful academic adjustment among first-year college students.

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