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Chapter

Self-Esteem: A Positive Way to Psychosocial Well-Being

Zoleka Ntshuntshe, Nokuzola Gqeba,

Malinge Livingstone Gqeba and Nolonwabo Majibha

Abstract

The process of globalisation has changed the pattern of social life of people across the globe. Undoubtedly this has had a bad impact on the lives of the people as it affects their social structures. This is because even though globalisation does have its advantages, it also has its disadvantages which we can say are the “negative effects” it has on people. The people that are mostly affected are the youth as they tend to be very “impressionable” and sometimes even “gullible” to the most appealing media and technology advances. For some they seek affirmations in these platforms, which may work to their detriment. Hence negative effects of globalisation manifests in all kinds of problems which have the potential to destroy individuals and families if there are no proper interventions in place to ensure better outcomes for all. This chapter will then try to explain what globalisation is, its impact on individuals especially the youth and the role of family and teachers in establishing and affirming children’s positive self-esteem. Ultimately the chapter will end by outlining therapy approaches for positive self-esteem formation.

Keywords: globalisation, self-esteem, affirmation, intervention

1. Introduction

This chapter will commence by explaining what self-esteem is. This is because self-esteem may have a direct impact on how a person sees himself/herself as it may also contribute to the way they conduct and present themselves to the world. The formation of a positive self-esteem is a direct result of a positive self-concept. So, what is self-concept? We are all good at something and we all do things that we can be proud of. These successes help us to develop a good self-concept. When you are successful at something, you feel good about yourself. These feelings bring about some confidence which is a feeling of self-assurance that is based on an awareness and appreciation of your abilities [1, 2]. Therefore it can safely be assumed that a person has a good idea about who he is, and these feelings can easily be transferred to the formation of a positive self-esteem. In other words, that confidence that a person has is a feeling of assurance that is based on an awareness and appreciation of his abilities. This means that one is certain of his/her knowledge, abilities and skills, especially in situations where these will succeed [1, 2]. That brings on what is called a positive self-esteem, which goes a bit deeper than self-concept because it has to do with self-respect and whether you understand and value your worth as a

person. This develops from infancy and continues up to adulthood, with a person feeling capable whilst also feeling loved.

Major contributors to the formation of a positive self-esteem are influences on your self-confidence and self-image which are your experiences in life, positive input and feedback from others, such as family, friends and peers, achievements and failure, beliefs and values, in other words, that feeling of being loved and accepted by others [3–5]. Thus when a child has successfully formed a positive self-concept, it is easy to translate those feelings and emotions to the formation of a positive self-esteem. When a person has formed a positive self-concept it is then very difficult to be easily taken in by all the bad things around them as it is often a personality trait which tends to be stable and enduring. Hence it is very important for teachers at school to continue to praise, acknowledge and affirm children as this is a direct continuation of what parents have already started at home. This is because how we see ourselves is often influenced by how other people see us and how they treat us. In addition to this, constant self-affirmations are necessary for a continued self-esteem. This simply means that a child does not need to sit and wait for others to affirm him; he can practise reciting self-affirmations which will continue to give him confidence, a positive self-image and ultimately the formation of a positive self-esteem about him. These positive self-affirmations can be in the form of “I am loved; I can do it; I am not afraid to fail; I can make friends easily; I am not afraid to ask for help; I am not scared to try out new things; I love myself even though sometimes I fail; I act responsibly; I am intelligent and every day brings new possibilities”.

Self-esteem is a term used to describe a person's overall sense of self-worth or personal value. It can also be described as how an individual sees himself/herself, how he/she perceives his value to the world and how valuable he/she thinks he/she is to other people [6]. People are often described as either having high self-esteem, in which case they think very well of themselves and their abilities, or low self-esteem (filled with doubts and criticism about themselves and their abilities). Self-esteem is important because it is an essential human need that is vital for survival and normal healthy development [6]. According to Maslow [7], psychological health is not possible unless the essential core of a person is fundamentally accepted, loved and respected by others and by himself.

Self-esteem also allows people to face life with more confidence, benevolence and optimism, thereby easily reaching their goals, and to self-actualise [8]. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there is the need to belong and in that process of the adolescent trying to fit in with peers. Also, one of the esteem needs people have is to be acknowledged as individuals in their own right and as a person of worth to others [8]. The self-esteem that a person has is a key factor in the way that a person relates to others, how he/she sees himself and the priority they give to meeting their own needs [6]. Adolescents who do not have the required context/environment and experiences for the development of healthy identity or because of severe stress may not be able to develop healthy identity. This may lead them to experience self-doubt and later on engage in self-destructive behaviours to relieve anxiety associated with confusion [9]. Maslow's hierarchy of needs states that until physical needs are satisfied, other needs cannot be met. However, literature has shown that interaction with children especially young children and youth revealed that the need for love and caring is necessary and more important than many physical needs [10]. Therefore the need for love and acceptance is very important to children as they contribute towards formation of a positive self-esteem. The above discussion has clearly shown the importance of a positive self-esteem with regard to preservation of the youth. Donnelan et al. [11] found low self-esteem in adolescence to be particularly damaging and is directly associated with aggression,

antisocial behaviour and delinquency. The youths are already at risk of developing low self-esteem due to a variety of reasons, and when there is no adult be in the form of a parent or teacher to play a significant role in the life of a child, the child may develop low self-esteem [6]. The above discussion has also shown the close link between a positive self-esteem and a healthy psychosocial well-being. High self-esteem is generally linked to positive outcomes [12]. In addition to this, it has been noted that people with higher and stable self-esteem generally have better life satisfaction and greater optimism about the future and better physical health than do those with lower self-esteem [13]. The next section will delve deeper and explain what globalisation is; how it affects people in general, particularly the youth; and its positive and negative aspects.

2. Globalisation: the context

Whilst the idea of globalisation is improving, interconnectedness across borders is a positive thing for the youth; it also brings about the reality of inequality and the widening of divisions between people. Young people have to grapple with the reality of global opportunities being exposed to them but also have to deal with the reality of poverty and deprivation in some instances (cultural, economic and social). Poverty and deprivation amongst the least-developed countries have forced the youth to migrate to countries that promise better opportunities [14].

Social implications of globalisation also have to do with where the people are located in North–South divide. There is evidence to suggest that there is improvement in the provision of health and education in developing countries given that they have been in the globalisation process. Added to this is the fact that there is recorded drop in infant mortality rate by 30% in countries like Brazil, Egypt and Malaysia [14].

2.1 Opportunities of globalisation

- Greater access to information—cell phones, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook
- Job markets at international levels
- Building of relations across borders
- Access to information across borders, religions, cultures and races

2.2 Threats of globalisation

- Youths have become a target for recruitment by terrorist organisations and have been drawn into religious cults using the internet.
- Human trafficking is also on the rise using job opportunities to lure job seekers.
- Drug trafficking—youths are being recruited into becoming drug mules.
- Fourth industrial revolution—job losses as semi-skilled workforce will be replaced by machines.

Because of this, it has become easy for groups with ill intentions to lure young people by dangling the potential of a life of opulence.

2.3 Globalisation and youth identity

Globalisation impacts directly and has a powerful influence on youth lives. The social benefits of globalisation are that it provides work opportunities that in turn increase independence, self-esteem and positive contribution to their family's well-being. Accessing the economic benefits (jobs) of globalisation, the youths have to migrate. Migration involves adapting to social changes that might include identity and a sense of place in the world. Beyond migration, things like employment patterns, friendship groups and usage of the internet all impact on the identity. Youths tend to be the most consumers of culture and are targets of messages loaded with global social problems. The Commission on Integrity and Cohesion [15] identified three themes that strengthen the influence on youth identity crisis. These are

- Super diversity—migrants suddenly come from countries all over the world and not only those that have historical links with each other.
- Multiple identities—the diverse sources of identity include race, gender and generation.
- Transnationalism—easy communication and links with even all over the globe contribute to transnationalism.

These impact on the notion of self and sense of belonging that are critical to youth identity, whilst on the other hand Gidley [16] bemoans the western cultural influence brought about by globalisation. Gidley points out that globalisation homogenises dominant (western) culture. This deprives young people individuality and identity that are central to the development of young people.

On the other hand, Ray [17] posits that globalisation creates a fluid world due to increased hybridism and differentiation. Hybridism according to scholars like Bhabha [18] and Soja [19] is a state of “in-betweenness.” As far as Bhabha is concerned, hybridism manifests itself as a form of progressive alternative in the construction of culture and identity. This creates an opportunity for the youth to act across cultures and create an understanding within a self-motivated interchange and inclusion in the global sphere [20]. Ray [17] seems to agree with the report of the Commission on Integrity and Cohesion [15] in positing that the globalised world does not “create homogeneity and polarisation” but rather creates creative and eclectic mix of identities. This situation creates difficulties for young people as they find it difficult to construct social identities. Added to this are cultural influences, needs of the labour market and the nature of education [21].

On the other hand Elie [22] provides a comprehensive list of 11 themes of how globalisation affects youth lives. The list is inclusive of the themes identified by the authors above. They are

- Access to and privatisation of education
- HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care for the youth
- Export-oriented manufacturing industries and young workers
- Trafficking of young women
- Indigenous youth
- Vulnerability of agricultural youth

- Violence and young people's security
- Globalisation of youth activism and human rights
- Young people access to technology
- Young people access to water
- Global youth culture and identity

3. Access to and privatisation

Globalisation has led to privatisation of education for different reasons that include improvements of efficacy and getting rid of government monopolies that impact negatively on trade [23]. The two scholars suggest that internationally more than 10,000 state-owned companies were privatised in 10 years between 1998 and 2008. The privatisation has not always yielded good results for both underdeveloped and developed nations. It has led to negative impact on environment, high levels of corruption and declining employment. The negative impact of privatisation on young people includes limited access to education, restricted employment opportunities and diminishing choices that were once open to young people.

4. Global structure and financial architecture

Traditionally, multilateral institutions were considered “remote and intangible” particularly by young people. However, with globalisation, young people have come to realise that these institutions play a pivotal role in their lives. In the 11 issues identified above, the role of multilateral institutions has been highlighted. There is evidence to the effect that with some reform, these institutions can give rise to a positive version of globalisation.

5. Representation, activism and human rights

It has become abundantly clear that young people globally do not find space to voice their opinions. Even institutions that offer them a voice do so with strict limitations. This limitation of channels for young people to voice their opinions has led to apathy when it comes to formal politics.

6. Inequitable representations

The interconnectedness between international economies has led to skewed relations where multilateral agencies operating in one region can exercise power that impact on nations, communities and households of other regions. This happens through “decisions, actions or inaction by these agencies [24]. Goodman [25] posits that these power imbalances are a prominent feature of globalisation.

The young has learnt that whilst opportunities have increased with globalisation, the imbalance in power relations institutionalises poverty through wealth and resources being concentrated amongst economically dominant nations, communities and corporations.

7. Education

Evidence has shown that investment in education contributes to equitable development and large-scale reduction of poverty. Oxform International [26] has however reported that 130 children of primary school-going age have no access to basic education. Globalisation to some is a barrier as many young people, particularly from poor households, get deprived of skills necessary for employment, limiting their productive capacity. The burden placed on many governments by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, to service foreign debt, limits the capacity of these governments to provide basic education.

8. Displacement

Globalisation has led to displacement of people from their arenas where they are able to make a living to unfamiliar territories where life is challenging. Reasons for displacement include environmental impact of globalisation, changes in agricultural patterns and the ever-present threat of conflict over resources. The reality is that whilst globalisation is known for the availability of increased economic opportunities, they are not open to all. Even with the commitments made at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992 and at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, very little has changed on environmental displacement [22].

9. Mitigating youth identity crisis

9.1 Intervention mechanisms

Westergaard ([27], pp. 98–105) posits that in counselling young people, it is important to bear in mind that the counsellor is not dealing with “mini-adults”. Young people have got their own challenging and complex issues. In her research ([27], pp. 98–105) four themes have been developed, which are essential in counselling young people. These are the significance of safety in the relationships, building the therapeutic alliance, flexibility and integration relating to theoretical orientation and the use of creativity. These might be some of the considerations in assisting youth to cope with the effects of globalisation.

9.2 Role of family in establishing and affirming children’s positive self-esteem

In the introduction of this chapter, a point was raised where teachers take up the role of continuing praising, acknowledging and affirming children, from parents.

Parents and teachers are supposed to play a team role in this aspect; it is not bearing fruit to shift the blame to each other, whilst each one of them has a unique contribution. These roles are clearly explained in the introduction of this chapter, which includes to love and to create an atmosphere of belongingness. The following are some of the ways that Adler and Steward [28] recommend:

- All learners/children should feel loved by the teacher/parent.
- Learners’/children’s abilities and talents should be discovered and appreciated.
- All learners should have a sense of belonging in class and at home.

- Individual needs should be considered at home and at school.
- Teachers should be conscious of individual's learner multicultural needs.
- Learners should be assisted to form strong relationships with their peers in so many ways including group work.
- Learners/children should be assisted to feel good about themselves, and teachers and parents should utilise powerful verbal feedback to assist learners/children to grow confidence and reach their full potential.

10. Therapy approaches for a positive self-esteem formation

Low self-esteem is not a condition or state of mind that cannot be addressed; it can be addressed or corrected with the engagement of one or all the following therapy approaches:

- **Cognitive behavioural therapy:** Beck & Freeman [29] explains this as a short-term therapy technique that can help people find new ways to behave by changing their thought patterns.
- **Acceptance and commitment therapy:** Burke [30] paints a picture of a unique empirically based psychological intervention that uses acceptance and mindfulness strategies, together with commitment and behaviour change strategies, to increase psychological flexibility.
- **Exposure therapy:** Hayes and Smith [31] view it as that which involves exposing the patient to the anxiety source; doing so is thought to help them overcome their anxiety or distress.
- **Mindfulness-based therapies:** Burke [30] unpacks this as an approach to psychotherapy that uses cognitive behavioural therapy methods in collaboration with mindfulness meditative practices and similar psychological strategies.

11. Conclusion

- Reflecting back to the introduction of this chapter, Maslow, in his definition of self-actualised person, highlights that he is the one who is characterised by no mental illness, is satisfied in basic needs, has fully exploited his talents and is motivated by values.
- Maslow's tenet to his theory suggests that satisfying needs (as mentioned in the introduction) make an individual healthy, and failure to satisfy makes one sick or act evil with the possibility of low self-esteem.
- In an effort to bring the winding up of this chapter, the writer saw that it is necessary that the relationship of Maslow's theory, globalisation and self-esteem be closely knitted together. Also the topics that will follow will serve to synchronise and serve as a peroration.
- Effects of globalisation in the absence of self-esteem.

- As youth moves to other countries to, amongst other things, pursue greener pastures, the dilemma of hybridisation which has been outlined in the previous section may surface. This is strongly associated to a lack of the sense of belongingness, which has a strong potential in leaving one with a low self-esteem.
- The previous section also puts a specific emphasis on the fact that globalisation creates a mix of identities for young people as they find it difficult to construct social identities. In one's life, attachments are not only to family and friends and familiar landmarks but also to one's social status. If one had a solid social status of perhaps very influential in the society where he have lived but suddenly is dependent upon other people for assistance and has no influence at all, then self-esteem may be affected.
- The previous section also underpins the feeling of displacement as a direct effect of globalisation. As people move from where they are able to make a living to unfamiliar territories where life is challenging, self-esteem tends to be very fragile especially in environments where love (as highlighted in Maslow's theory) is not thriving and only the survival of the fittest is a necessary factor for making ends meet.

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Author details

Zoleka Ntshuntshe*, Nokuzola Gqeba, Malinge Livingstone Gqeba
and Nolonwabo Majibha
University of Fort Hare, East London, South Africa

*Address all correspondence to: zntshuntshe@ufh.ac.za

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