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## Self-Esteem And Psychological Wellbeing Of Secondary Students In Anambra State, Implication For Sustainable Mental Health And Student Engagement

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### Abstract

The study investigated self-esteem and psychological wellbeing of secondary school students in Anambra State, implication for sustainable mental health and student engagement. A correlational research design was employed for the study. The study was guided by two research questions. The population of the study comprised 20,889 senior secondary two (SS2) students (M= 9,411 and F=11,478) from public secondary schools in Anambra State. The sample for this study comprised 763 SS 2 students made up of 396 males and 367 females, drawn using multistage sampling procedures. For the data collection, the researcher adapted two sets of instruments namely; the Self-Esteem Evaluating Rating Scale (SEERS) developed by Gopal (2016), and the Psychological Well-being Scale (PWS) developed by Ryff (1989). The face validations of the instruments were established by three experts. The internal consistency of the items for each instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha and coefficient values of 0.81 was obtained for self-esteem, and 0.86 for psychological well-being. The collected data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The study also showed that self-esteem and psychological well-being are strong predictors of sustainable mental health of male senior secondary school students in Anambra state, while a moderate predictor of the sustainable mental health of female senior secondary school students in Anambra state. The study suggests that enhancing student engagement through strengthening self-esteem and psychological well-being could promote sustainable mental health. Based on the

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findings, it was recommended among others that, Post Primary School Service Commission should train and post qualified guidance counselors to secondary schools to help senior secondary school students strengthen their self-esteem and psychological well-being for enhancement of a sustainable mental health.

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**Abstrak :**

**Kata Kunci:**  
Mendengarkan, Podkas,  
Pengucapan

Studi ini menyelidiki harga diri dan kesejahteraan psikologis siswa sekolah menengah di Negara Bagian Anambra, implikasinya terhadap kesehatan mental yang berkelanjutan dan keterlibatan siswa. Desain penelitian korelasional digunakan untuk penelitian ini. Penelitian ini dipandu oleh dua pertanyaan penelitian. Populasi penelitian ini terdiri dari 20,889 siswa sekolah menengah atas dua (SS2) (M= 9,411 dan F=11,478) dari sekolah menengah negeri di Negeri Anambra. Sampel penelitian ini berjumlah 763 siswa SS 2 yang terdiri dari 396 laki-laki dan 367 perempuan, yang diambil dengan menggunakan prosedur multistage sampling. Untuk pengumpulan data, peneliti mengadaptasi dua perangkat instrumen yaitu; Skala Penilaian Penilaian Harga Diri (SEERS) yang dikembangkan oleh Gopal (2016), dan Skala Kesejahteraan Psikologis (PWS) yang dikembangkan oleh Ryff (1989). Validasi wajah instrumen dilakukan oleh tiga ahli. Konsistensi internal item masing-masing instrumen ditentukan menggunakan Cronbach Alpha dan diperoleh nilai koefisien sebesar 0,81 untuk harga diri, dan 0,86 untuk kesejahteraan psikologis. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis regresi berganda. Studi ini juga menunjukkan bahwa harga diri dan kesejahteraan psikologis merupakan prediktor kuat terhadap kesehatan mental berkelanjutan pada siswa sekolah menengah atas laki-laki di negara bagian Anambra, sementara merupakan prediktor moderat terhadap kesehatan mental berkelanjutan pada siswa sekolah menengah atas perempuan. students in Anambra state. The study suggests that enhancing student engagement through strengthening self-esteem and psychological well-being could promote sustainable mental health. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that, Post Primary School Service Commission should train and post qualified guidance counselors to secondary schools to help senior secondary school students strengthen their self-esteem and psychological well-being for enhancement of a sustainable mental health.

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## INTRODUCTION

The quest for happiness and satisfaction is what every normal individual clamor for, the method and manner through which every individual accomplishes this bliss and shapes of accomplishment can differ broadly according to the individual and circumstances and secondary school students are not left out on this. According to Singh and Prakash (2020), people are encouraged to live a happy, healthy, and fulfilled life in every major aspect. Secondary school students are the future of every nation and the school period is a significant part of their life as it is a transforming phase for students where they are presented with different psychological and social difficulties. In changing times of modernity, secondary school students are facing even more complex problems such as Problems with Peers, Issues with Authority, Romantic Relationship Challenges, Social Inadequacy, Family Events, Alcohol, Drugs, and Suicide thoughts among others. They need appropriate mental health to be able to carry on. To develop a good psychological wellbeing the individual self-esteem is very consequential (Davies 2019). Research revealed that around 50% of mental health disorders in adults begin in the adolescent years, and one-third of adolescent deaths are suicide triggered as a result of poor psychological wellbeing, (Johan, 2018). According to Davies (2019), psychological well-being is very essential for the total well-being of man throughout life, it is the experience of good health, happiness, and prosperity which includes having good mental health, high life satisfaction, a sense of meaning or purpose and ability to manage stress. It is something desired by everyone because it includes so many positive things such as feeling happy, healthy, socially connected, and purposeful.

Psychological well-being represents the state of individuals whose lives are going well; it represents a combination of feeling good and functioning effectively, (Trudei-Fitzgerald, Milstein & Von, 2019). They stated that students with good psychological well-being will achieve and sustain a state of good mental health, they are creative, learn and try new things, take risks, as a result, are better able to cope with difficult times in their personal lives. They feel sad, angry, and depressed as a result of the death of a loved one, failed examination, or relationship problems but they usually

come to terms with the reality soon. Research carried out by Eremie and Chikweru (2015) revealed that the psychological well-being of secondary school students can be improved through the use of basic counseling skills and the improvement of psychological factors such as self-esteem.

Self-esteem constitutes an essential component of healthy personality development of an individual, which is accomplished in a specific social and cultural setup, (Orth & Robins, 2014). Self-esteem is conceptualized as the perceptions that an individual makes about himself or herself which is generally viewed as positive or negative. It refers to a person's overall sense of self-value or worth. The positive or negative way people think and feel about themselves. In the conceptualization of Mocheche, Bosire, and Raburu (2017), self-esteem is the person's overall sense of self-worth, personal value, or personality trait which tends to be stable and enduring. An adolescent might have the feeling that he is good and that he or she deserves a good thing or that he or she is bad and so deserves a bad thing. This opinion is important because self esteem influences an adolescent student's choices and decisions and self carriage. It serves as a motivational function for students by making it more or less likely for them to take care of themselves and explore their full potential. In the context of this study, the researchers define self-esteem as an adolescent's self-assessment, self-perception, or evaluation which can be positive or negative, pleasant or unpleasant, having a strong will, self-confidence, decision-making power, creativity, sanity, and mental health which are directly related to a sense of self-worth.

However, two aspects of self-esteem exist, low self-esteem and high self-esteem and either level can be emotionally and socially harmful to an individual. Low self-esteem is the evaluation of oneself as being incompetent to cope with the basic challenges of life, to possess an unfavorable opinion of oneself, hence having a weak faith and ability to go through and get things done. Students with low self-esteem are often depressed and paranoid, they are more likely to experience social anxiety and a low level of interpersonal confidence (Berg et al, 2023). Low self-esteem is also associated with antisocial behavior like bullying, depression, and other physical health Issues detrimental to an individual's mental health. Living with low self-esteem can harm a student's mental health and lead to problems such as depression and anxiety.

He or she may also develop unhelpful habits, such as smoking and drinking too much, as a way of coping.

According to Davies (2019) Low self-esteem is not categorized as a mental health condition in itself but there is a clear links between the way people feel about ourselves and the overall mental and emotional wellbeing. She maintained that low self-esteem can affect mental health in various ways, such as relationships, as humans, we make efforts to interact with others and the relationships we have with people very close to us help define us as people, negative relationships ultimately predispose people to negative feelings and a negative perception of themselves. furthermore, psychological studies indicate that low self-esteem in childhood and early adulthood can be a predisposition to addiction in later life. Many addicts use substances such as drugs or alcohol to help ease the negative feelings they have about themselves. But over time this method of escapism develops into an addiction and of course, this has detrimental effects on their already depleted self-esteem levels and finally their mental health.

However, High self-esteem indicates positive self-regard, and holding a high opinion about one's self. Rosenberg cited in Owens, Sheldon, and Goodman, (2011) explained that adolescents who possess high self-esteem are keen on personal growth and development. They make use of their capabilities. These groups of adolescents believe in themselves and what they can do. Mcleod (2020) observed high self-esteem as a basic human need that plays a key role in behavior especially concerning whether one moves toward authentic (Healthy) or inauthentic (unhealthy) behavioral choices and patterns. People with high self-esteem generally have better psychological well-being. Consequently, students possessing high self-esteem are more likely to have higher well-being, better social relations, and experience more satisfaction than their counterparts and a sustainable mental health, (Orth, Robins &Widaman, 2017).

Good mental health and psychological well being with positive self esteem will help the students to get motivated and inspired, (Satnam & Pooja, 2016). Mental health is a level of psychological well-being or an absence of a mental disorder, it is the psychological state of someone who is functioning at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioral adjustment (Satnam & Pooja, 2016). From the perspective of positive psychology, mental health may include an individual's ability to enjoy life and create

a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects the way we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices (Sama, 2016).

Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood to adolescence through adulthood. A person struggling with his or her mental health may experience stress, depression, anxiety, relationship problems, grief, addiction, ADHD or learning disabilities, mood disorders, or other mental illnesses of varying degrees. According to Satnam and Pooja (2016), mental health is considered the springboard of thinking and communication skills, learning, emotional growth, resilience for recovering quickly, and self-esteem right from early childhood until late life. Self-esteem, psychological well-being, and mental health are all interwoven and need accurate proportions to produce a stable individual.

Various empirical studies over the last 15 years have shown that self-esteem is a very important psychological factor that predisposes one to poor, high, positive, or negative mental health and quality of life. Self-esteem and psychological well-being are the most dominant and powerful predictors of happiness. Indeed, while low self-esteem leads to maladjustment, positive self-esteem seems to contribute to psychological well-being. These psychological factors together with self-concept and identity are among the key elements of mental health. Another important variable of concern in this study is gender; consideration should be given to the extent to which gender interacts with self-esteem and psychological well-being to predict good mental health.

Gender refers to the roles, behavior, activities, attributes, and opportunities that any society considers appropriate for girls and boys, woman and man. Different characteristics, behavior, and roles are ascribed to females and males. Moreover, psychologists are of the view that gender has an impact on various aspects of adolescents and can also affect changes in their developmental stages (Tahir et al, 2022). Both male and female adolescents go through intense mental health trauma. The causes of poor mental health among adolescents have been attributed to so many factors such as childhood abuse, trauma, neglect, loneliness, discrimination and

stigma, social disadvantage, bereavement, severe or long term stress among others. An attempt to find solution to the challenges of poor mental health, factors such as self-esteem and psychological wellbeing has been identified (Sosa et al, 2024). Psychological well-being associated with self esteem and mental health is not a new phenomenon. However, in spite of the attention given to these variables: self-esteem, psychological well being and mental wellbeing in most foreign and local studies, there is yet, need to conduct research on it in Anambra State, Nigeria because most of the studies in this area of the study dealt with only one side, either the self-esteem, psychological well-being or mental wellbeing. This prompted the study on self-esteem and psychological wellbeing of secondary students in Anambra State, implication for sustainable mental health.

### **Statement of Problems**

The state of self-esteem and psychological well-being is regarded as both a risk factor influencing social functioning and behavior problems of secondary school students thereby creating different kinds of adverse effects on their mental health. The consequences if not properly addressed may extend to adulthood, damaging both physical, emotional, and social functioning of the individual in the later years. In Anambra State, there appear to be cases of secondary school students operating under the influence of drugs and alcohol as a result of low self-esteem and poor psychological well-being. This factor seemed to be an impediment to their healthy growth and development. Often these groups of adolescents are seen to engage in clandestine activities such as cultism, drug use, and abuse, smoking, drinking, disobedience to school authorities to parents and guardians, bickering, brawling, and keeping late nights. Girls among them seeking care and attention from the opposite sex engage in premature sexual engagements, unintended pregnancy, and abortion among others. These group of adolescents are pushed early into depression, anxiety, low self mood, self-comparison, emotional neglect, and feeling of inadequacy which most times follow them to adulthood.

Several government bodies have through campaigns and orientations programs tried to create awareness among students in state public schools in order to sensitize them on the negative implications of developing low self-esteem and poor psychological well being of themselves. The State Government have also taken more

step to improve on this by establishing guidance and counseling departments in various State Public schools in Anambra state, so as to prevent and also modify and improve the negative self concept and behaviors of these young adolescents using various counseling techniques and skills. However, few researchers have investigated the relationship between self-esteem, psychological well-being, and mental health. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the prediction of self-esteem and psychological well-being on the mental health of senior secondary school adolescents in Anambra State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is to examine self-esteem and psychological well-being as predictor of mental health of secondary school students in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:-

1. Ascertain the predictive value of self-esteem on the mental health of senior secondary school adolescents in Anambra State.
2. Determine the predictive value of psychological well-being on the mental health of secondary school adolescents in Anambra State.
1. 3. Find out the predictive value of self esteem and psychological well being on the mental health of male and female senior secondary students in Anambra State.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by two research questions:

1. What is the predictive value of self-esteem on the mental health of senior secondary school adolescents in Anambra State?
2. What is the predictive value psychological well-being on the mental health senior secondary school adolescents in Anambra State?
3. What is the predictive value of self esteem and psychological well being of male and female senior secondary students in Anambra State.

### **METHOD**

The Correlation research design was adopted for the study. According to Nworgu (2006), correlation studies indicate the direction and magnitude of the relationship between variables of the study. The design is appropriate since the study



sought to collect data from the respondents in order to establish the direction and magnitude of self-esteem and psychological well being, and to ascertain the predictive ability of self-esteem and psychological well-being on the mental health of senior secondary school adolescents. The study was carried out in Anambra State. Anambra state is one of the five states in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 20,889 senior secondary two (SS2) students (M= 9,411 and F=11,478) from public secondary schools in Anambra State. (Source: Anambra State Post Primary School Service Commission Awka, March 2023). The sample for this study comprised 763 SS 2 students made up of 396 males and 367 females drawn using multistage sampling procedures. The instruments used for data collection are Self Esteem Evaluating Rating Scale (SEERS) developed by Gopal Swainathan (2016), and the Psychological Well-being Scale (PWS) developed by Ryff (1989). The content validity of the instruments was established.

The instruments were trial tested on a representative sample of 20 SS2 students, 10 males and 10 females randomly selected from two public secondary schools in Enugu State. Enugu State was chosen for the reliability test because Enugu State belonged to the old Anambra State and both states have identical cultures and education systems. The scores obtained from the respondents were collated to determine the internal consistency of the items for each of the sections. This was done using Cronbach Alpha. The choice of Cronbach Alpha is in line with Howith and Cranner (2011) who recommended Cronbach Alpha as a proper statistical tool for determining the internal consistency of an instrument. The result gave the coefficient values of 0.81 for Self-Esteem and 0.86 for Psychological Well-Being (APWB-S). An overall coefficient value of 0.8 was obtained. The overall Alpha coefficient value of 0.80 indicates that the instrument was reliable to be used for the study. The researcher administered copies of the instruments to the respondents with the help of five briefed research assistants.

The completed copies of the instruments were collected on the spot. Follow-up visits were made to collect copies of the questionnaire from those who do not complete theirs at the first visit. A total of 763 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 749 copies were properly filled and successfully retrieved, indicating a 98% percent return.

Regression analysis was used to analyze the data collected. For assessing the goodness of fit of the regression model, using regression coefficient (R). The decision rules for the research questions are as follows for the regression coefficient; 0-0.1-weak predictor, 0.1 -0.3 modest predictor, 0.3 -0.5 moderate predictor. >0.5=strong predictor. However, negative R indicates a negative predictor/relationship. For the decision on the hypotheses, if the p-value is equal to or less than the significant value of .05, the null hypothesis was rejected, but if the p-value is greater than the significant value of .05, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the presentation, interpretation and analysis of data collection based on research questions that guided the study.

### Research Question 1: What is the predictive influence of self-esteem on the mental health of secondary school students in Anambra State?

The result of predictive value of self-esteem on the mental health of secondary school students in Anambra State is presented in table 1 for discussion

Table 1

*Predictive value of self-esteem on the mental health of secondary school students in Anambra State*

Mode					Std. Error of the	
1	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square		Estimate	
1	.819	.671	.630		7.66	
Sum of						
Model		Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	957.077	1	957.077	16.297	.004
	Residual	469.823	747	58.728		
	Total	1426.90	748			

Table 1 shows that R square of .819 with R adjusted square .630. This implies that 63% of variance in students' mental health is explained by self-esteem. In other

words, the predictive influence of predictive influence of self-esteem on the mental health of secondary school students in Anambra State has large influence. Table 1 also shows that self-esteem has significant predictive influence on the mental health of secondary school students in Anambra State ( $F(1,748)=16.297, p<.05$ ).

**Research Question 2: What is the predictive value of psychological well-being on the mental health of secondary school students in Anambra State?**

The result of predictive influence of predictive influence of psychological well-being on the mental health of secondary school students in Anambra State is presented in table 2 for discussion

Table 2

*Predictive value of psychological well-being on the mental health of secondary school students in Anambra State*

Mode					Std. Error of the	
1	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square		Estimate	
1	.744	.553	.498		8.925	
Sum of						
Model		Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	789.59	1	789.586	9.911	.014
	Residual	637.314	747	79.664		
	Total	1426.900	748			

Table 2 shows that R square of .744 with R adjusted .498. This implies that 49.8% of variance in students' mental health is explained by psychological well-being. In other words, the predictive influence of predictive influence of psychological well-being on the mental health of secondary school students in Anambra State has moderate influence. Table 2 also shows that psychological well-being has significant predictive influence on the mental health of secondary school students in Anambra State ( $F(1,748)=9.911, p<.05$ ).

**Research Question 3: What is the predictive value of self-esteem and psychological well-being on the mental health of male and female secondary school students in Anambra State?**

**Table 3**

*Predictive value of self-esteem and psychological well-being on the mental health of male and female secondary school students in Anambra State*

Gender	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
male	1	.960 <sup>a</sup>	.922	.922	3.36654
female	1	.871 <sup>a</sup>	.758	.757	5.54046

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Gender	Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
male	1	Regression	51599.555	2	25799.778	2276.394	.000 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	4352.109	384	11.334		
		Total	55951.664	386			
female	1	Regression	34562.374	2	17281.187	562.965	.000 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	11020.134	359	30.697		
		Total	45582.508	361			

**Coefficients**

Gender	Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	T
			B	Std. Error	Coefficients	
male	1	(Constant)	20.264	1.078		18.802
		Psychological_wellbeing	1.395	.086	.286	16.149
		Self_esteem	1.053	.024	.763	43.155
female	1	(Constant)	-4.924	2.626		-1.875
		Psychological_wellbeing	3.287	.164	.556	20.053
		Self_esteem	.854	.047	.501	18.069

Table 3 shows that implies that 92.2% (Adjusted R Square, .922) variance in students' mental health is explained by self-esteem and psychological well-being for male students while that of female students 75.7% (Adjusted R Square, .757) variance in students' mental health is explained by self-esteem and psychological well-being. Table 3 shows that self-esteem (Standardized Coefficients Beta, .763) has more predictive influence on mental health of male students than psychological well-being (Standardized Coefficients Beta, .286). Table 3 also shows that psychological well-

being (Standardized Coefficients Beta, .556) has more predictive influence on mental health of female students than self-esteem (Standardized Coefficients Beta, .501).

## DISCUSSION

The result of the study revealed that self-esteem is a strong predictor of the mental health being of senior secondary school adolescents in Anambra State. This is in support of the finding of Dogan, Totan, and Sapmaz (2013) who reported that there was a strong correlation between self-esteem and mental health. The possible explanation for this finding is that self-esteem helps in developing positive identity and assertiveness in adolescents which contribute to mental being. Self-esteem is found as a strong predictor of mental health because it creates positive socialization and good peer relationships which reduce depression and other physical health issues. Adolescents' self-esteem gives them positive feelings about everyday experiences in life activities.

It was also found that psychological well-being is a significant predictor of the mental health of senior secondary school adolescents in Anambra State. This conforms to the finding of Amalu (2017) which revealed that psychological well-being significantly predicts the mental health of students. This is also in line with the finding of Sarkova (2010) which revealed that psychological well-being was significantly correlated with the mental health of adolescents. The possible explanation for the agreement between the two studies is that psychological well-being installs self-confidence and disposition to cope with daily challenges which promote happiness and mental health.

The results of the study also showed that self-esteem is a strong predictor of the mental health being of male senior secondary school adolescents, while it is a moderate predictor of mental health of female senior secondary school adolescents. This gives credence to the finding of Shamsul (2018) which revealed that self-esteem has a strong influence and relationship with the mental health of male and female students. An explanation for this finding is that it is certainly plausible that societal gender roles give more privileges to males compared to females. Male students have confidence in their abilities and have the freedom to perform certain roles whereas female students due to the societal belief system and cultural limitation seek confirmation for some of

their actions which lower their self-esteem. The societal belief system and roles of male students may inculcate in them the general feelings of self-worth and self-acceptance which influence them more than their female counterparts.

It was also reported that psychological well-being is a significant predictor of the mental health of male and female senior secondary school adolescents in Anambra State. This supported the finding of Shamsul (2018) who reported that there was a significant influence of psychological well-being on mental health of male and female students. Male and female students have a good sense of value and worth which is a strong predictor of their mental health.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that

The Post Primary School Service Commission should train post-qualified guidance counselors in secondary schools to help senior secondary school students overcome their problems and strengthen their self-esteem and locus of control for enhancing their psychological well-being.

School principals should set out a week in every academic session for the enlightenment of students on various ways to develop positive views about themselves, to build high self-esteem and locus of control that contribute to their psychological well-being. The Ministry of Education should support functional guidance and counseling services by providing and making funds available to research and improve rendering professional assistance to students with low self-esteem and locus of control.

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