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Self-esteem of socially maladjusted adolescents in the context of selected personality and environmental determinants

Summary

The article is an analysis of the results of the studies conducted in a group of socially maladjusted youth in whose case the family court applied educational measures, i.e. placed them in a Youth Educational Centre. The aim of the study was to find out the correlations between self-esteem, personality traits of maladjusted adolescents, and the environmental determinants (support factors and limiting factors). A total of 481 juveniles staying in Youth Educational Centres (YEC) participated in the study. The analysis showed that in the model the significant predictors of self-esteem were neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness and negative relations at school. The obtained research results are to be used in designing methodological solutions in order to support social rehabilitation and education activities carried out both in an open environment and in social rehabilitation facilities.

Key words: self-esteem, youth, social maladjustment, social rehabilitation

In order to understand an individual's psychosocial development, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1976, 2009) suggests a holistic approach to human's environment, taking into consideration the physical and internal (mental) environment as well as socio-cultural systems making varied networks. It can be assumed that human's self-esteem is formed within a system of different locations (family, peer group, school etc.) and as a result of many social interactions. Environment is made of different smaller and bigger systems and any relationships between these systems that may affect the individual's development. These are: the microsystem (family, class, school, peer group etc.), mesosystem (interactions

between microsystems, relations between the parents and the teacher, the child and their friends), exosystem (external environment not directly affecting the individual's development, e.g. parents' job, or the class of one's older brother or sister), and macrosystem (broader socio-cultural context of the economy, politics and culture) (Bronfenbrenner 1976, 2009). Therefore, the significance of various environments in a person's life and the process of mutual adaptation of the person and the environment in which he or she functions (individual – family – school – peer group) seems to be unquestionable (Kemp, Whittaker, & Tracy 1997).

Analysing the issue of adolescents' self-esteem, it seems justified as well to connect the subject with some assumptions of the theory of symbolic interactionism, in the light of which social reality is defined as interactions occurring between its participants, affecting the individual's behaviours. The authors of that theory, American scholars Charles H. Cooley and George H. Mead (Sztompka 2002), emphasise the importance of the so-called looking-glass self. It is a source of image of oneself developed on the basis of reactions of others and interactions between them in a certain social context. Hence, the concept of looking-glass self is associated with an individual's self-esteem, their view of themselves. This view significantly affects the person's behaviour, and self-esteem is to a great extent the effect of social processes, not individual introspection. Thus, the formation of self-image is the result of a complex process of interactions between an individual and that individual's environment. The person's self is formed on the basis of their individual ideas of what others think about him or her (Błachut, Gaberle, & Krajewski 2000).

Self-esteem is a set of diverse judgements and opinions relating to oneself, and in particular to one's appearance, talents, accomplishments and capabilities. These opinions and judgements may relate to current physical and/or psychological characteristics, as well as to potential capabilities (Niebrzydowski 1976). Self-esteem includes views about oneself (what am I?) and one's possibilities (what am I able to do and what can I do?) (Tyszkowa 1972). Self-esteem can also be recognised as one of the three central components of self-knowledge. The first two components: self-description and self-esteem are defined as the "real me". This is what the man is in fact. The third component (personal standards) defined as "perfect me" belongs to the normative knowledge (Kozielecki 1986).

The processes of comparing and differentiating between the sense of one's own value and the value of others are the basis for the development of self-evaluation, or self-esteem. An individual should act with consideration of their

own capabilities, making decisions (especially difficult ones) in a responsible way. Evaluating one's own skills and abilities is the basis for predicting what effects the actions will have. If the evaluation is positive and adequate, the person reacts in a relatively calm and reasonable way, even in difficult situations. If it is too high or too low, then he or she displays increased demand for information confirming their value. Positive information gives rise to emotions that motivate one to go on, while negative information or the lack of information evokes anxiety, fear, depression, guilt, panic or discouragement. Self-esteem is related to well-being. It is also a factor reducing the negative effects of stress. In studies concerning this subject, not only the level of self-esteem is emphasised but also its stability. High but unstable self-esteem often causes negative emotional responses, such as anger or hostility. It is a manifestation of so-called fragile high self-esteem, which can often lead to mental instability, the loss of health, or to anti-social behaviours (Borys 2010; Veselska et al. 2009).

Both the global and the partial self-assessment, can be considered according to the level (high-low), adequacy (too high-too low, adequate-inadequate), stability (stable-unstable), value (positive-negative), the assurance of judgements and opinions of the individual about himself/herself (certain-uncertain [endangered]) (Reykowski 1966). The component of self-esteem that is regarded as the criterion of social adjustment is self-acceptance, perceived as the level of agreement between the values upheld by a person and the person's behaviour. Both low and high levels of self-acceptance are assumed to be associated with maladjustment. High self-acceptance resulting from too high (irrelevant) self-esteem has a defensive character and continues as a result of using the mechanism of repression. The low one means a divergence within the "self", i.e. low integration of identity, responsible for the low level of understanding social stimuli and conflicts (Dzwonkowska et al. 2008: 7).

Operationalising the dependent variable, it was assumed that self-esteem is the belief of one's own worth revealed in self-report. It is a positive or negative attitude to the self, a kind of global self-evaluation, and refers to one's physical characteristics, personality, and relationships with others. Different people may evaluate particular aspects of the self in different ways, being inclined to positive evaluations in dimensions important for them, or to regard as important the dimensions which make the evaluations of themselves appear more positive than the evaluations concerning other people (Dzwonkowska et al. 2008).

It can be assumed that relevant, positive self-evaluation is one of the key protective components of a person. In a way, it allows one to cope with different

ups and downs in life. There are many different factors influencing the level of self-esteem, e.g. in the family, local community, school and even within the person. The determination of these factors in the above-mentioned areas is one of the main motivations for research which can produce effective ways of helping children and adolescents from high risk groups in the future by their practical application in early interventions and preventive activities. Generally, maladjusted adolescents have lower well-being and low self-esteem. The low perception of oneself is often the source of many functional problems among those people. Besides, a negative image of oneself intensifies the search for acceptance in peer groups out of school, which may promote their hazardous behaviours (Marsden et al. 2005).

The focus on a broader spectrum and different planes which determine the development of self-esteem is among others the result of studies that confirm new aspects of the phenomenon revealed depending on the adopted point of view and the appropriate level of analysis. Scholars emphasise the possibility of relations between personality traits and environmental influences (the micro-environment of the family, peer groups and school), which determine the development of adolescents' self-esteem. The issue of formation of the self requires that interactions between microsystems are taken into consideration: the relationships between the individual and their parents, teachers and peers, as well as aspects connected with the institution functioning formally in a broader socio-cultural context. The study involved an attempt to holistically approach the problem of self-esteem formation; therefore, when determining independent variables, the determinants connected with personality (individual) traits and environmental factors (family, peer and school support, negative relations with the family, at school and with peers) were taken into consideration. It seems that this approach to the problem may be useful not only in the analysis of the phenomenon but can also provide quite an extensive base for rehabilitation practitioners designing preventive-remedial and creation activities (Bronfenbrenner 2009; Jessor 1991; Konopczyński 2014; Veselska et al. 2009).

The studies indicate the connection between personality traits (Pullmann & Allik 2000) sense of family support (Rosenberg & McCullough 1981) psychological well-being (Button, Loan, Davies, & Sonuga-Barke 1997), resilience (Wagnild 2009; Wagnild & Young 1993) and behaviour disorders, aggression, crime rate (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi 2005; Griffiths et al. 1999) or depression (Salmon, James, & Smith 1998). Therefore, it is so significant to verify whether both personality traits and environmental factors

are connected with global self-esteem and to what extent. The aim of the study was to find out the correlations between self-esteem, personality traits of maladjusted adolescents, and the environmental determinants (support factors and limiting factors). On the basis of previous research and the adopted theoretical assumptions, the following hypotheses can be made:

- H1. self-esteem is correlated with extraversion and is associated with agreeableness and conscientiousness;
- H2. the level of self-esteem is negatively correlated with risk factors and positively with preventive factors.

The paper analysed also:

- which of the personality and environment variables (support and restrictive factors) are the predictors of the self-esteem?;
- whether self-esteem level, personality traits, received support feeling, and negative relationships feeling are different for teenage boys and girls?;
- whether socio-demographic factors (age, length of stay in the youth educational centre, hometown population size of the minors) variegate self-esteem level, personality traits, and increase in support factors and restrictive factors?

Participants

According to the Centre for Education Development, in 2014 there were 5,057 adolescents in Youth Educational Centres (3,129 boys with normal intellectual capacity, 409 boys with mild intellectual disability, 1,427 girls with normal intellectual capacity, and 92 girls with mild intellectual disability). The necessary sample size was also determined: $n_b = 390$ for the population of adolescents from Youth Educational Centres in Poland (only including those with normal intellectual capacity) with confidence coefficient 0.90 and maximum error 4% (Brzeziński 2004). The sampling was both purposive and random. The criterion of purposive sampling was the type of institutions where the participants had been placed by the family court. The selection of the institutions for the study was random (non-returnable sampling), and the sample was dependent on the character of the population (finite) and its specificity (the youths placed in Youth Educational Centres by Family and Juvenile Divisions of District Courts). The proper research was conducted in 2014. The total of 481 adolescents

staying in Youth Educational Centres (YEC) participated in the study. An insignificant majority of the respondents were boys – 54% (N = 258 pupils), while the girls (N = 218) constituted 46% of the respondents. Five of the pupils did not answer the question. Data obtained during research show that age of the respondents was within the 14–18 years old range. The largest group of respondents were teenagers at the age of 16 (36.4%) and 17 (36%), the second largest were teenagers at the age of 15 (13.3%). The least numerous groups were teenagers at the age of 18 (10%) and 14 (4.2%). The analysed group consisted of slightly larger percentage of people whose hometown population size was between 10 and 100 thousand inhabitants (31.8% of total). 21% of the respondents came from place with population size under 10 thousand, another 21% from place with population over 500 thousand, and 19.5% from place with population between 100 and 500 thousand. Stay of the minor in the youth educational centre should theoretically last until reaching adulthood, however, escapes from the facilities are very common. The minor is removed from the facility's record and then court is informed, which again directs the minor to another facility of the same type. The respondents were asked about length of the stay in the educational centre in which they are currently staying. Therefore, at the time of conducting the research, the largest group was that of minors who stayed at the centre for time shorter than 12 months (280 pupils, 58.2%). This is proven also by research of Z. Bartkiewicz, where over 70% of questioned pupils stayed in the facility (youth educational centre) for time shorter than 12 months. 118 (24.5%) pupils stayed in the facility between 12 and 24 months, while 82 (17.3%) over 24 months.

Methods

The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (SES), in the Polish adaptation by Irena Dzwonkowska, Mariola Łaguna and Kinga Lachowicz-Tabaczek (2008), was used to measure self-esteem. It is a univariate instrument used to assess the general self-esteem level, which is a relatively constant disposition understood as a conscious (positive or negative) attitude to the self. The scale includes 10 diagnostic statements. A participant uses a four-point scale to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. The reliability of the original version ranged from 0.77 to 0.88 (Blascovich & Tomaka 1991).

NEO-FFI by P.T. Costa and R.R. McCrae was used to diagnose personality traits included in a popular five-factor model (the Big Five Model). It has been adapted into Polish by Bogdan Zawadzki, Jan Strelau, Piotr Szczepaniak, and Magdalena Śliwińska. The questionnaire items are 60 self-report statements whose relevance the respondents evaluated in a five-point scale. The items make 5 scales measuring: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. The reliability of these subscales is generally satisfactory; however, it is lower for Openness and Agreeableness than for the other scales (Costa & MacCrae 1992; Zawadzki, Strelau, Szczepaniak, & Śliwińska 1998).

A questionnaire concerning support factors and risk factors was constructed to measure environmental determinants. It is made up of 6 factors: family support, peer support, school support, negative relations in the family, negative relations at school, and relations with peers engaged in antisocial activities. It includes 35 diagnostic statements. A participant uses a five-point scale to indicate how much he or she agrees with each statement. The reliability of the obtained scales ranges from 0.67 to 0.87.

Statistical analyses

The t-Student parametric test and analysis of variance (univariate ANOVA) were used to test the correlation between dependent and independent variables, thus answering the question whether selected independent variables (gender, age, length of stay in the facility, hometown population size) variegate the dependant variables. Correlation and regression analyses made it possible to determine relations between variables – directly proportional (for values of > 0) or inversely proportional (for values of < 0). The strength of compounds was interpreted according to the following key: $R > 0.5$ as strong correlation, R mark between 0.3 and 0.5 as moderate correlation, R between 0.2 and 0.3 as weak correlation, and $R < 0.2$ as no or negligible correlation. Predictors of self-esteem have been determined on the basis of logistic regression analysis. A variable that explains at least 5% of the total variance of the dependent variable was considered a predictor. Thus we obtain results regarding the importance of self-esteem.

Results and discussion

Table 1 presents the basic statistical parameters of the studied variables.

Table 1. Results of self-esteem, personality traits, and environmental factors (supporting and restrictive) scale: average values and standard deviations in the whole questioned group and depending on gender

	Juveniles (whole group)		Boys		Girls		Significance of differences	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	t	p
SES	28.16	5.71	27.94	5.35	28.69	5.80	-1.463	n.i.
NEU	24.44	7.29	23.43	6.65	25.62	7.91	-3.292	0.001
EKS	28.97	6.25	28.16	6.32	30.06	5.95	-3.357	0.001
OTW	23.21	4.94	23.03	4.75	23.51	5.16	-1.062	n.i.
UGD	25.72	6.02	25.00	5.78	26.77	6.07	-3.244	0.001
SUM	30.42	7.15	29.74	6.81	31.37	7.39	-2.503	0.013
NRR	17.07	7.54	17.03	7.41	17.03	7.71	-0.002	n.i.
WRD	18.16	5.48	18.30	5.13	18.05	5.89	0.477	n.i.
NRS	8.98	3.79	9.57	3.82	8.26	3.61	3.786	0.000
WRW	18.95	4.63	18.43	4.65	19.61	4.54	-2.771	0.006
RRP	13.94	4.61	13.79	4.42	14.10	4.85	-0.719	n.i.
WSZK	11.42	4.25	11.13	4.19	11.71	4.32	-1.469	n.i.

Source: own research

In bold – differences statistically significant on level $p < 0.05$

n.i. – statistically insignificant result

SES – self-esteem; NEU – neuroticism; EKS – extraversion; OTW – openness to experience; UGD – agreeableness; SUM – conscientiousness; NRR – negative relations with parents; WRD – family support; NRS – negative relations at school; WRW – peer support; RRP – relations with persons (peers) engaged in criminal activity; WSZ – school support.

The mean calculated for global self-esteem is 28.16 and it is slightly lower than the mean score obtained in an adaptation study carried out among persons aged 15–19 (that score was 28.24), which demonstrates that adolescents have slightly lower global self-esteem. For neuroticism, this index was 24.44, for extraversion, 28.97, and for openness to experience, 23.21. For the scale of

agreeableness, the index was 25.27, and conscientiousness, 30.42. During analysis of degree of influence of risk factors (negative relationships at school, negative relationships within family, relationships with demoralised peers and peers engaged in criminal activity) and protective factors (familial, peers, school support feeling), it was established that it is rather varied. Familial support factor equalled 18.16, peers – 18.95, school – 11.42. The result on the scale of negative relationships within family equalled on average 17.07, of negative relationships at school – 8.98, of relationships with people engaged in criminal activity – 13.94.

Analysis using t-Student test of the independent samples showed that the boys differ significantly from the girls on the scale of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness. The average of the group of girls is statistically significantly higher than in of the group of boys. This means that in the questioned group, girls have higher intensity of the named personality traits. Moreover, the girls received higher than the boys average result on the scale of peers support feeling. It may prove that the girls have higher feeling of support received from the closest peers than boys do. The boys differ significantly from the girls also on the scale of negative school relationships feeling. The average of their group is statistically significantly higher than of the group of girls. This means that boys have feeling of being misunderstood and of negative relationships at school more frequently.

There are no statistically significant differences between the compared groups regarding self-esteem. No statistically significant differences occurred among the results of the scale of openness to experience, negative familial relationships, familial support feeling, relationships with people engaged in criminal activity, and school support feeling.

Differences in self-esteem, personality traits, support factors, and restrictive factors due to age

As a next step of the analysis, average values of the general self-esteem, personality traits, and support and risk factors were determined for groups of people in various ages.

The conducted univariate analysis of variance showed statistically significant differences between groups only in the neuroticism. On the basis of Tukey's honest significance test it can be ascertained that teenagers at the age of 14, 16, and 17 had lower neuroticism feeling than questioned 15-year-olds. In other

cases, the age did not variegate the general level of self-esteem, personality traits, and support feeling in the family, school, and peers areas, as well as areas related to the restrictive factors.

Table 2. Results of Life Orientation Questionnaire (SOC-29) and Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS) in the questioned group of youth depending on age

	Age 14		Age 15		Age 16		Age 17		Age 18		Test F P
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
SES	28.21	5.13	26.75	6.50	28.25	5.16	29.08	5.60	28.26	4.81	2.00 n.i.
NEU	23.52	7.59	28.43	7.74	24.30	6.73	23.46	7.26	25.13	8.06	5.42 14.16.17 < 15
EKS	29.94	6.15	28.91	7.36	28.89	6.36	29.31	6.16	28.37	4.64	0.33 n.i.
OTW	23.31	6.50	24.01	5.55	23.54	4.66	23.09	4.95	22.80	4.44	0.58 n.i.
UGD	28.10	5.21	24.98	7.13	26.25	5.44	25.54	5.95	25.24	6.23	1.41 n.i.
SUM	30.42	6.57	30.31	7.34	31.01	6.54	30.27	7.83	31.20	6.04	0.32 n.i.
NRR	19.21	8.54	16.90	7.55	16.80	7.89	17.28	7.37	16.57	6.76	0.51 n.i.
WRD	18.73	5.92	18.26	4.99	18.17	5.70	18.28	5.30	18.00	5.70	0.07 n.i.
NRS	9.26	3.14	9.38	4.07	8.73	3.87	8.90	3.61	9.17	3.60	0.41 n.i.
WRW	19.10	4.71	19.11	4.64	18.98	5.00	19.20	3.98	18.60	4.77	0.16 n.i.
RRP	15.15	4.52	14.26	4.73	13.92	4.90	13.88	4.12	14.06	4.96	0.38 n.i.
WSZK	13.05	4.70	11.61	4.33	11.22	4.41	11.22	4.14	11.97	3.52	1.10 n.i.

Source: own research

In bold – differences statistically significant on level $p < 0.05$

n.i. – statistically insignificant result

Differences in self-esteem, personality traits, support factors, and restrictive factors due to the length of stay in the youth educational centre

Then, average values of the selected variables (self-esteem, personality traits, environmental factors) due to the length of stay in the youth educational centre were determined.

Table 3. Results of Life Orientation Questionnaire (SOC-29) and Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS) in the questioned group of youth depending on the declared length of stay in the youth educational centre

	under 12 months (1)		between 12 and 24 months (2)		over 24 months (3)		Test F P
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
SES	27.81	5.84	29.15	5.26	27.92	5.76	2.38 n.i.
NEU	25.27	7.65	23.39	6.18	22.94	7.14	4.72 2.3 < 1
EKS	29.38	5.96	28.62	6.49	27.98	6.85	1.74 n.i.
OTW	23.14	4.95	23.41	5.016	23.14	4.85	0.12 n.i.
UGD	26.32	5.82	25.03	6.51	24.55	5.73	3.66 n.i.
SUM	30.71	7.03	30.74	7.14	28.81	7.50	2.28 n.i.
NRR	16.54	7.50	17.38	7.69	18.62	7.32	2.41 n.i.
WRD	18.69	5.08	17.66	6.09	16.96	5.71	3.67 3 < 1
NRS	8.92	3.57	8.68	4.17	9.69	3.94	1.70 n.i.
WRW	19.07	4.58	18.79	4.88	18.77	4.47	0.21 n.i.
RRP	13.79	4.72	13.97	4.49	14.45	4.42	0.60 n.i.
WSZK	11.39	4.16	11.03	4.59	12.14	3.99	1.59 n.i.

Source: own research

In bold – differences statistically significant on level $p < 0.05$

n.i. – statistically insignificant result

The conducted univariate analysis of variance showed statistically significant differences between groups in the neuroticism and familial support feeling. On the basis of Tukey's honest significance test it can be ascertained that teenagers who stayed at the centre shorter than 12 months had higher level of the neuroticism feeling than respondents who stayed at the centre between 12 and 24 months, or over 24 months. Moreover, on the basis of the test it was determined that there are differences in the familial support feeling between the questioned groups. Teenagers staying in the centre for over 24 months had lower level of familial support feeling than teenagers staying in the centre for under 12 months. In other cases, length of stay in the facility did not variegate general level of self-esteem, personality traits, and support feeling in the school and peers area, as well as areas related to the restrictive factors.

Differences in self-esteem, personality traits, support factors, and restrictive factors due to hometown population size

Then, average values of the selected variables (self-esteem, personality traits, environmental factors) due to declared population size of hometown of the juveniles were determined.

Table 4. Results of Life Orientation Questionnaire (SOC-29) and Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS) in the questioned group of youth depending on declared population size of hometown of the questioned juveniles

	under 10 thousand (1)		between 10 and 100 thousand (2)		between 100 and 500 thousand (3)		over 500 thousand (4)		Test F p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
SES	26.93	5.50	28.28	5.36	28.48	6.02	29.87	5.29	4.79 1 < 4
NEU	25.46	5.70	24.41	7.67	24.09	7.80	23.35	7.49	1.46 n.i.
EKS	28.45	5.63	28.70	6.64	29.41	6.10	30.16	6.15	1.64 n.i.
OTW	23.60	4.40	22.59	5.38	22.90	4.63	23.78	5.11	1.54 n.i.
UGD	25.73	5.48	25.43	6.37	26.05	5.80	26.22	6.46	0.41 n.i.

SUM	29.61	6.03	30.32	7.47	30.84	7.55	31.86	7.10	1.81 n.i.
NRR	17.07	7.46	17.57	7.66	16.60	7.31	16.19	7.74	0.75 n.i.
WRD	17.64	6.07	17.98	5.30	18.69	5.09	19.05	5.25	1.47 n.i.
NRS	9.17	3.80	8.78	3.72	9.11	3.93	8.61	3.67	0.51 n.i.
WRW	18.12	5.04	19.30	4.42	18.90	4.79	19.61	4.20	2.03 n.i.
RRP	13.93	4.78	14.28	4.42	13.94	4.74	13.57	4.62	0.48 n.i.
WSZK	11.48	4.14	11.17	4.29	11.50	4.34	11.77	4.37	0.40 n.i.

Source: own research

In bold – differences statistically significant on level $p < 0.05$

n.i. – statistically insignificant result

The conducted univariate analysis of variance showed statistically significant differences in the self-esteem between groups. On the basis of Tukey's honest significance test it can be ascertained that teenagers whose hometown had under 10 thousand inhabitants had lower level of general self-esteem than participants whose hometown had over 500 thousand inhabitants. In other cases, hometown population size did not variegate general level of self-esteem, personality traits, and support feeling in the family, school, and peers areas, as well as areas related to the restrictive factors.

Analysis of relationships between the self-esteem and personality traits, support factors, and restrictive factors

In order to check the correlations between self-esteem and personality dimensions, Spearman's Rho correlation coefficients were computed first. The results of the obtained correlations are presented in the table below.

The analysis showed significant moderate or weak correlations between self-esteem and neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness ($p < 0.001$), whereas openness to experience was not correlated to self-esteem. The correlations between self-esteem, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness are positive. Self-esteem increases as the level of those personality traits

Table 5. Correlations between adolescents' self-esteem and personality traits

	SELF-ESTEEM	
	Spearman's Rho	p
NEU	-0.39*	0.000
EKS	0.32*	0.000
OTW	0.06	0.138
UGD	0.24*	0.000
SUM	0.39*	0.000
NRR	-0.26*	0.000
WRD	0.19*	0.000
NRS	-0.41*	0.000
WRW	0.23*	0.000
RRP	0.03	0.404
WSZK	0.00	0.959

Source: own research

* The correlation is significant at the level of 0.01 (bilaterally)

grows. The correlation of self-esteem and neuroticism, in turn, is negative. As neuroticism grows, self-esteem decreases. The strongest correlations were found for self-esteem and traits such as conscientiousness or neuroticism. The analysis of the obtained study results showed significant moderate or weak correlations between self-esteem and family support, peer support, negative relations in the family, at school, and with peers. The correlation between self-esteem and protective factors connected with support is positive, which leads to the assumption that self-esteem increases as the level of these factors grows. As for the correlation between self-esteem and risk factors, it is negative: when these factors increase, the self-esteem of socially maladjusted adolescents decreases. The relations between the above-mentioned variables are as follows: as family support (parents' care, the character of relationship with the parents) and peer support (good relations with friends and acceptance on their part) grows, the general level of self-esteem also increases. On the other hand, the lower the level of negative relations at school and negative family relations, the higher the self-esteem level. Thus, the study hypothesis made in this problem area is confirmed. Analysing the value of coefficients, it is worth stressing that none of them exceeded 0.50, which proves moderate strength of correlations between the analysed variables.

Hence, it must be emphasised that self-esteem is moderately positively correlated with extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness, negatively with neuroticism, and not significantly correlated with openness to experience. It also needs to be underscored that the obtained results are in agreement with the results of the study by David Schmitt and Jüri Allik (2005: 623). This allows for the assumption that persons with low neuroticism (emotionally stable, calm, able to cope with stress in a proper way), high agreeableness (liking others and willing to provide help), high conscientiousness (motivated to act) and high extraversion (friendly and warm) have higher self-esteem than people with the opposite values of those personality traits (Pullmann & Allik 2000; Schmitt & Allik 2005).

As shown by the obtained study results, interpersonal environment – i.e. the quality of the individual's relations with the world, especially in relations with significant others (parents, peers, school) – is of key importance for the development of self-esteem, which is in conformity with the assumptions of the theory by Bronfenbrenner (1976, 2009) presented in the beginning. Self-esteem is formed under the influence of evaluations received from the people decisive for the life of the young person. Four areas of interaction are particularly important: support from parents and peers, and the low sense of negative relations at school and in the family. So the quality of social influence significantly affects the content and structure of “self”, determining the possible range of potential educational interactions. If the individual can feel social support, the changes occurring in their identity are oriented at adjusting the content of the “self” to social norms (then self-esteem grows) and adaptational advancement takes place; otherwise it regresses. In this case, social support is an important factor constituting youths' self-esteem, and changes in these areas lead to changes in their identity.

So as to study the influence of all the analysed variables on the level of self-esteem, a linear regression analysis was performed in which the dependent variable was self-esteem and independent variables, personality traits, risk factors and protective factors associated with self-esteem. Hierarchical regression with the entry method was applied. In the first model, neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness and agreeableness were included, and in the second one, four risk and social support factors were added: negative relations with parents, family support, negative relations at school, and peer support. Both models proved to be significant; the first model explains 33.5% of the variance of the dependent variable of self-esteem, and the second one, 39%. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. The results of regression analysis for models 1 and 2

	ANOVA	Adjusted R ²	F changes
Model 1 (neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness and agreeableness)	F(4; 463) = 59.81; p < 0.001	0.335	–
Model 2 (neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness and agreeableness, negative relations with parents, family support, negative relations at school, peer support)	F(8; 459) = 38.97; p < 0.001	0.394	F(4; 459) = 12.29; p < 0.001

Source: own research

Table 7. Non-standardised and standardised regression coefficients

Variables	Coefficients		T-Student test	
	non-standardised B	standardised beta	t	Significance
Model 1				
(Constant)	24.270		15.517	0.000
Neuroticism	–0.278	–0.382	–9.864	0.000
Extraversion	0.137	0.162	3.816	0.000
Agreeableness	0.071	0.080	1.941	0.049
Conscientiousness	0.168	0.223	4.855	0.000
Model 2				
(Constant)	27.879		15.149	0.000
Neuroticism	–0.256	–0.353	–9.368	0.000
Extraversion	0.098	0.116	2.771	0.006
Agreeableness	0.032	0.036	0.899	0.369
Conscientiousness	0.122	0.162	3.589	0.000
Negative relationships with parents	–0.130	–0.026	–0.586	0.558
Family support	0.348	0.071	1.643	0.101
Negative relationships at school	–1.285	–0.230	–5.093	0.000
Peer support	0.359	0.061	1.471	0.142

Source: own research

The significance of the developed models means that they better explain the studied phenomenon than does the mean, hence both the sets of variables proposed in the first and in the second model affect the youths' level of self-esteem. Regression coefficients are shown in Table 7.

The analysis showed that in the first model the significant predictors of self-esteem were neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness, and in the second one these were neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness and negative relations at school. The analysis of the obtained study results showed that the second model explains a greater percentage of variance and therefore it was adopted as the final model for interpretation. Self-esteem assumed the constant value (27.88) regardless of the analysed variables. Extraversion and conscientiousness have a positive influence on self-esteem: as they grow, self-esteem also grows. Neuroticism and negative relations at school have a negative influence on self-esteem: as they grow, self-esteem lowers. Neuroticism proved to be the strongest predictor, followed by negative relations at school, for which the absolute value of the standardised Beta coefficient is the highest. The other variables – agreeableness, negative relations with parents, or family and peer support – are not significant predictors of self-esteem.

The analysis of the obtained results shows that the discussed personality traits and the qualities of social environment depending on the configuration and context may support or disturb youths' self-esteem. In the group of socially maladjusted people, unstable or low self-esteem usually occurs. The sense of threat to one's self-esteem occurs when the person is not sure of their own value and not convinced whether they will succeed in the task they have embarked on. Maladjusted people often respond with excessive anxiety and frustration to any failures they may experience. The sense of danger may either originate with the process of upbringing or with certain personality traits (extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism). High anxiety and constant threats experienced at school cause low self-esteem and a significant discrepancy between the real and ideal concept of oneself. In diagnostic and educational work, an important element in such a situation is to verify the programs of individual influence and to measure the effectiveness of actions applied to adolescents in the context of different areas of functioning of a young person. This aspect is related to verification diagnosis, aimed at checking the accuracy of the obtained diagnostic image.

Self-esteem of most people achieves its basic form in the final period of adolescence, and once it is formed, it will not easily change. This first of all refers

to global self-esteem, the general attitude a person has towards themselves (Potocka-Hoser 1985: 31), which in rehabilitation practice means that it is important to learn the time and circumstances in which low self-esteem appeared in the young person's life (whether it occurred relatively recently or has its source in early childhood experiences). Depending on these circumstances, proper educational activities should be taken, whose aim is to counteract the negative patterns of thinking about oneself.

Therefore, shaping self-esteem in the positive direction can promote better social functioning. High self-esteem allows you to maintain well-being, high quality of life, self-esteem that is effective in coping with everyday life (anxiety, stress). Having a high self-esteem is a source of positive emotions, energy, feelings towards oneself, but also affects the perception of the world as friendly and non-threatening. That is why it seems that the obtained results of the study will help in the area of conducting educational and therapeutic classes with the socially maladjusted youth.

Global self-esteem, as well as personality traits and environmental factors correlate with each other in the group of the examined youth. The analysis indicates the correlation between self-esteem and neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness, whereas openness to experiences was not correlated with self-esteem. Moreover, the analysis of the obtained results indicated significant correlations with the sense of family support, peer support and negative relationships in the family and at school. In the first model significant predictors for self-esteem turned out to be neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness, whereas in the second model such a role was played by: neuroticism, extraversion and negative relationships at school. Furthermore, the comparative analysis showed that:

- underage girls differ from underage boys in the area of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, as well as on the scale of the sense of family support and negative relationships at school;
- youngsters aged 14, 16 and 17 years displayed a lower level of the neuroticism than the examined fifteen-year-olds;
- the individuals who have stayed in the facility less than 12 months indicated a higher level of neuroticism than the examined individuals who have stayed in the facility from 12 to 24 months and for over 24 months;
- the individuals staying in the facility for over 24 months indicated a lower level of the sense of family support than the individuals who have been in the facility for less than 12 months;

- the individuals who come from locations up to 10 thousand residents displayed a lower level of general self-esteem than the examined individuals who come from locations with over 500 thousand residents.

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