Counseling Strategies for Dealing With the Challenges of Raising and Educating Adolescent Girls With Self-Esteem Issues

A Literature Review Presented to The Faculty of the Adler Graduate School

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Abstract
This literature review provides an overview of current research to help improve the self-esteem of adolescent girls. Self-esteem issues have multiple negative effects on success in both their personal and school life. Many girls believe they are not good enough or do not measure up in some way, including their looks, performance in school and relationships with friends and family members. This paper will present the challenges of raising and educating adolescent girls with self-esteem issues. The sources of external pressures and the effects it has on their mental health. The need for perfectionism and engagement in negative behaviors. Strategies will be provided for a professional school counselor to implement to address these concerns. Negative gender stereotypes and unrealistic expectations of body image will be addressed. There are many different programs out there to help encourage positive self-esteem and increase successes. The effectiveness of selected interventions will be identified. These strategies should be used with the goal of building up adolescent girls’ self-esteem.
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Counseling Strategies for Dealing With the Challenges of Raising and Educating Adolescent Girls With Self-Esteem Issues

Professional School Counselor Role

Professional school counselor’s roles include promoting academic success and address students’ mental and physical health. This can be done through classroom lessons, individual or small groups, other forms of interventions as well as teacher and parent involvement (Eford, 2010). Research has shown the undeniable link between a low self-esteem and academic failure. Therefore, professional schools counselors are in the position to support adolescent girls’ social emotional development, by supporting, promoting and building up self-esteem.

School counselors are responsible for leading, advocating and providing opportunities within the school system to support students (Eford, 2010). Adolescent girls are experiencing an important life stage of their development. During this stage, they are building a self-perception of themselves that will carry on through the rest of their lives (Lindwall, Asci & Crocker, 2014). Therefore, professional school counselors need to support, educate and provide opportunities for their adolescent girl students to strengthen and develop their self-esteem.

Importance of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the beliefs about ones attributes and abilities as a person, which can be viewed as positive or negative based on an individual’s self-value (Ohrt, Webster & Garza, 2015). Low self-esteem is linked to having lower academic success, mental health issues, eating disorders, risky behaviors and issues maintaining positive relationships. In contrast, high self-esteem is linked to having higher academic success, mental health, healthy eating habits, decision-making skills and the ability to maintain positive relationships (Yang, Yen, Ko, Cheng
School counselors can increase adolescent girls overall life satisfaction by supporting and aiding in their self-esteem development.

Those with high self-esteem do not give up easily after failure, are willing to take risks, know what they want while having the confidence to ask for it, trusts their own judgment and maintains sense of self within ones relationships. In contrast, those who do not have a high self-esteem would give up easily after failure, be unwilling to take risks, have little or no confidence to ask for what they deserve, be persuaded easily against their own beliefs and have a low sense of self-worth (Bingham & Stryker, 1995). Professional school counselors can look for these signs when working with students, in order to better understand their students and figure out how to change these behaviors by increasing self-esteem.

**Adolescent Stage of Life**

Throughout the adolescence stage of life, girls are experiencing many changes in their development, including a decrease in their self-esteem. Adolescent girls are figuring out who they are and have many external influences that can either support or hinder their self-esteem. The adolescent stage plays a large role in life satisfaction due to the multitude of biological, psychological, social and cognitive changes and high demands occurring during this phase (Moksnes & Espines, 2013). Therefore, building up and supporting adolescent girls self-esteem is vital in order to achieve success in life, while building a healthy foundation towards their development into adulthood. Professional school counselors are an important resource that adolescent girls can utilize in order to build up their self-esteem.

Self-esteem affects adolescent girls’ choices and decision making skills as well as having a large impact on their daily life. Having a higher self-esteem contributes to a positive self-identity. Self-esteem is a powerful source of motivation for adolescent females. Having a high
self-esteem also includes having a sense of self-acceptance and respect for oneself, while feeling valued by others. Without these characteristics adolescent girls can face a wide variety of negative psychological conditions (Yang, Yen, Ko, Cheng & Yen, 2010). Professional school counselors can help prevent psychological conditions from occurring in adolescent girls by teaching and supporting positive decision making skills.

During adolescence, girls experience physical, cognitive and relational changes in their lives. These changes contribute to their self-esteem and can either hinder or strengthen one's sense of self. Multiple studies have linked a positive sense of self-esteem to factors such as psychological health, mattering to others, and both body image and physical health (Myers, Willse & Villalba, 2011). Professional school counselors need to be aware of and support adolescent girls’ development in order to strengthen their self-esteem.

During girls’ adolescence puberty is taking place. Some girls may experience pubertal maturation later than others. Girls who experience early pubertal maturation have a lower self-esteem due to a low physical satisfaction with their bodies (Stojković, 2013). Not only do these girls criticize their own bodies due to early pubertal maturation, but their peers may also make fun of them for looking different than the rest of the girls. Having a different physical appearance opens up the door for criticism from others. This criticism combined with an already low self-esteem causes even more issues such as social isolation, negative view of self and the inability to form healthy relationships.

In Stojković’s test of mediation effects between perceived pubertal timing and self-esteem, the parental relationship with adolescent daughters played a role in self-esteem. This test found that adolescent females’ self-esteem was affected based on their closeness with both of their mother and father, the amount of control by the mother and father and conflict with the
mother (Stojković, 2013). The amount of parental constriction with their daughters caused conflict in their relationships.

In this study, adolescent girls reported that their fathers were more controlling over what they did and that girls would get into more conflicts with their mothers. Those adolescent girls who experienced early pubertal maturation reported having parents who controlled more of their social life and experienced more conflict. Parents often placed more control and engaged in more conflict due to the fear of sexual relations because of their daughters’ matured body (Stojković, 2013). Therefore, school counselors can educate and converse with parents about the ways in which they can help support and build their daughters self-esteem.

Sources of Self Esteem

Self-esteem is influenced by many different sources, including culture, family, experiences and perspective. One’s culture includes the environment they were brought up in and the values and beliefs, which were placed on them. These values and beliefs can affect ones self-esteem as they continue to grow older, by comparing their experiences to others and allowing their roots to define who they are (Walton & Fisette, 2013). In Walton and Fisette’s research study, adolescent girls were asked about the way their values and beliefs shaped their ideas around being girl (Walton & Fisette, 2013). This part of the study was very interesting, as the females would not question other girls beliefs in respect to others religions. Adolescent girls have a hard time discussing topics when religion was involved.

When ones religion was brought up other females did not question their reasoning behind their beliefs, but rather accepted their ideas respectfully. The researchers noted that religion often played a part in the girls not wanting to talk about their body parts or sexual orientation based on their beliefs or the beliefs of others and their discomfort to talk about sexual behaviors (Walton
This study brings up the sensitive topic, of religion, when talking to adolescent girls about their beliefs. Professional school counselors should therefore keep in mind the influence religion has on ones beliefs and be respectful of those ideas.

It is important that parents, teachers and professional school counselors watch for and help adolescent girls develop their abilities. In order to do this, they must feel autonomous, develop the capacity to be self-sufficient, feel competent to master new skills, develop character, have an authentic sense of self and feel valued (Bingham & Stryker, 1995). When an adolescent girl feels autonomous, they feel like they are in charge of their own life and can accomplish anything they put their mind to. Feeling self-sufficient means that one will be responsible for them and not depend on others in order to achieve their goals. Feeling competent to master new skills, allows for one to take risks and not give up easily when challenged. Developing character allows for girls to know who they are, what they want out of life and what she believes. Having an authentic view of self allows for one to determine who they are without letting others influence that they should be in life. Feeling valued supports positive feelings one has about themselves (Bingham & Stryker, 1995). Therefore, self-esteem is important in order for adolescent girls to make positive choices on their own without letting negative influences affect them.

Without a high self-esteem adolescent girls will be unable to make positive decisions that benefit their lives and will allow negative experiences to shape who they are as a person. With a higher self-esteem, adolescent girls are able to overcome and learn from the negative issues that happen during their life (Tripkovic et al., 2015). Adolescent girls who have been accepted, respected and supported during their lives accept all of their characteristics and are able to develop and a healthy level of self-esteem. Being able to accept oneself for who they
truly are allows adolescent girls to transition through the adolescent stage of life without letting negative experiences shape their identity.

Environment

Environment includes the geographical location or living conditions in which one is living. An individual’s self-esteem can be formed through being a product of their environment. The living conditions, stresses, uncertainty or adaptations one needs to make in their environment in order to survive, shapes the one views themselves in society (Svedberg et al., 2014). For example, if an adolescent girl grows up in an environment where women are seen as housewives and whose sole purpose is to bare and care for children, they may grow up believing they are incapable of succeeding in a career or lifestyle not typically seen in the environment they grew up in. Self-esteem in adolescent girls is important in order to overcome any negative beliefs about themselves, which resulted from the environment they grew up in.

One’s environment based on financial stability and resources also plays a huge role in self-esteem. If there are fewer opportunities for adolescent girls to explore their talents, or to challenge themselves as an individual, they will be limiting themselves and their future successes. Therefore, adolescent girls who grow up in poverty have fewer resources available to them and they surrender their goals and dreams (Svedberg, et al., 2014). When one lives in a financially stable environment, in which opportunities are made available, adolescent girls are able to challenge themselves, participate in activities and strengthen their self-esteem.

Professional school counselors need to be aware of resources and opportunities to share with their female students in order to support their self-esteem. The more resources and opportunities made available to adolescent girls the stronger their self-esteem can become.
Family

Family impacts adolescence girl’s self-esteem through either support or the lack of support from its members. The less support one has, the more likely one is to have a low self-esteem. The importance of family satisfaction has a large effect on self-esteem. A research study showed a strong correlation between adolescent female’s positive relationships with their parents and their life choices. It was also pointed out that the way the student feels about their families functioning or dynamics may be different than another families (Cashwell, 1995). Diverse family dynamics is something professional school counselors need to be aware of when working with adolescent girls. Another families functioning will most likely be different from their own family functioning.

Keeping ones biases and personal experiences to the side, is important in order to fully understand what is going on in the child’s life, so that one can better assist the student. For example, one family may view getting C’s as being academically successful, whereas another family may view A’s as being academically successful. The views and academic values placed upon each adolescent girl will be different from family to family (Cashwell, 1995). Making sure one is aware of these beliefs is important, so that one does not assume that a girl’s self-esteem is low based on getting C’s in school. Every adolescent female’s life is different and it’s important to help students, based on their own needs.

Experiences

Experiences can shape an adolescent girl’s belief about herself if they let it. Going through a negative experience can have a huge impact on the way one feels about them. One can overcome their experiences by having a high self-esteem. Perspective is the way one views and thinks about the things that happen during their life. The way adolescent girls interpret situations,
is largely impacted by the way they feel about themselves (Bingham & Stryker, 1995). Adolescent age girls are easily influenced, therefore a high self-esteem is crucial in order to make positive healthy choices. Without a high self-esteem, these sources could have a negative impact on adolescent girl’s lives. Common mental health issues that arise in the female adolescent stage of life include: dissatisfaction with life, anxiety and depression. Low self-esteem has been related to symptoms of depression and anxiety.

High self-esteem is an important intrinsic resource and protective factor that aids towards positive coping and better adjustment in adverse life events, which can further promote health, well-being and life satisfaction (Moksnes & Espnes, 2013). Adolescents with high self-esteem can better cope with the daily tasks of life resulting in less mental health issues.

Since extrinsic influences are so great around adolescent girls, they must have a strong sense of self to overcome any negative influences. A strong sense of self comes from ones self-esteem and is a contributing factor in being able to make positive decisions in life, while ignoring negative external influences. Therefore, school counselors can improve adolescent girls overall quality of life by empowering and building up their self-esteem.

Identity

Researchers believe that adolescent girls experience issues with their self-esteem due to a conflict with their personal identity. A research study talked about how an adolescent must first have a sense of who they are and what they want in life, before they can move forward (De Man, Harvey, Ward & Benoit, 2008). Being that adolescence is a time full of changes, with a large amount of external influences, ones understanding of their self-identity may take longer to achieve.

Adolescent girls who displayed an understanding of their self-identity also displayed a
higher self-esteem. They were more self-directed, knew what they wanted and how to ask for it, good at problem solving and had the ability to cope with the demands in life (De Man et al., 2008). In order to succeed in all other aspects of one’s life and move forward successfully, adolescent girls must first know who they are and be able to identify themselves, so that they can live their lives happily the way they want to with the influence of a high sense of self-esteem.

**Body Image**

Body image plays a large role in the way adolescent girls define themselves. Their self-evaluation is based on the way others look and perceive themselves. The link between perception of appearance and self-worth is one of the strongest predictors of self-esteem in adolescence girls (Clay, Vignoles & Dittmar, 2005). Adolescent females often face body image issues and compare their own bodies to those they see on the media and other forms of advertisement. Young females compare their bodies and have the social desire to look like the women in the magazines (Javaid, & Ahmad, 2014). These beliefs and comparisons may lead to an eating disorder, due to the negative perception of body image or self-worth.

Building up one’s self-esteem would therefore build a positive sense of self and about one’s body image, leading to healthy eating habits and a decrease in eating disorders. They reported that 44% of the American young girls believed they were overweight and 60% were actively typing to lose weight although majority of these girls were within normal weight ranges (Javaid & Ahmad, 2014). This statistic represents the negative opinions that adolescent females have about their bodies. These negative opinions combined with a low self-esteem lead to eating disorders and a negative sense of self. Adolescents who believe they are overweight and are dieting have an increased risk of obesity and having an eating disorder (Perrin, Boone-Heinonen,
Field, Coyne-Beasley & Gordon-Larsen, 2010). Therefore, a high self-esteem works as a protective factor against obesity and eating disorders in adolescent females.

Low self-esteem contributes to negative body image and both of these combined are associated with drug, alcohol and cigarette use, risky sexual behaviors and suicidality (Wild, Flisher, Bhana & Lombard, 2004). The negative body image adolescent girls have of themselves affects their social life. Adolescent girls with low self-esteem try to fit in or be something they aren’t in order to feel a sense of self-worth. Professional school counselors can help these girls by encouraging and supporting self-acceptance.

**Media**

There is empirical data, which validates the negative effects that media has on adolescent girls. A media study reviewed by Clay, Vignolas and Dittmar (2005) showed that out of 500 adolescent girls, nearly 70% believed magazine pictures influenced their idea of the ideal body shape and 47% wished to lose weight because of it. This study showed a large amount of adolescent girls who are negatively affected by the media.

Adolescent girls self-esteem is based on their physical appearance in comparison to others negatively affects their self-worth and can lead to negative behaviors such as eating disorders and risky behaviors due to having a low self-esteem (Clay, Vignolas & Dittmar, 2005). Professional school counselors need to be aware of these negative effects and use classroom curriculum, group and individual counseling to support positive body image and the way one views themselves in comparison to others. Building up adolescent girl’s self-esteem will help them view themselves in a positive light and stop allowing their idea of self-worth to come from the comparison to others.
Adolescent girls who have a heavier body mass feel there is a greater difference between their actual body size and their desired ideal size. The participants from a body image study who displayed signs of having a lower self-esteem also had a lower sense of body satisfaction overall according to analyses (Javaid & Ahmad, 2014). The negative self body image aided in and affected these females self-esteem. This low self-esteem combined with the portrayed ideal thin female body on the media only negatively contributes to a low sense of self.

Individuals with a higher body satisfaction were affected less by the images portrayed in the media and reported being mostly satisfied with their body image. Research has proven that females under the age of 19 are impacted more negatively by the media than women of older age. Adolescent girls are more vulnerable to media exposure and therefore the greater amount of media they are exposed to, the more likely they are to have a have negative view of self (Clay, Vignoles & Dittmar, 2005). Limiting the amount of media that adolescent girls are exposed to can therefore help support self-esteem.

**Eating Disorders**

Low self-esteem is proven to be a contributing factor for adolescent girls in having an eating disorder (Obeid, Bucholz, Boerner, Henderson, Norris, 2013). Those with low self-esteem are more susceptible to having an eating disorder because of their negative views of self, and lack of self-worth. Having an eating disorder such as anorexia nervosa or binge eating include having a feeling of shame or low self-worth, which people who have low self-esteem also exhibit (Obeid et al., 2013). Having a sense of shame about one’s body or appearance in a contributing factor that affects adolescent girls.

The pressures from society, peers, media and internal thoughts places negative views of self on these adolescents. Promoting a healthy body mass index, body acceptance and high self-
Adolescent girls’ self-esteem issues
during adolescence will help prevent negative eating behaviors (Teixeria, Perera, Marques, Saraiva, & Macedo, 2016). Promoting healthy eating behaviors is not the only way to improve adolescent girls’ self-esteem, but also accepting one’s body type and having a positive sense of self-worth. Professional school counselors can promote acceptance and self-worth among their adolescent girl students to improve self-esteem.

Researchers found that adolescent girls who have anorexia nervosa also have low self-esteem in relation to individual, social and family areas of their lives. They are worried about what others think of their appearance and use those external views to define who they are as a person. The negative opinions have the power to impact adolescents’ views of themselves, resulting in low self-esteem and an eating disorder, such as anorexia nervosa (Matera, 2007). One of the ways to increase this self-esteem is to have adolescent girls change their behaviors.

Having a sense of acceptance for one’s body type and having the ability to ignore negative external opinions is important in order to achieve and maintain ones self-esteem. Therefore, professional school counselors need to not only promote healthy eating habits, but also teach body acceptance in adolescent females in order to strengthen self-esteem to prevent eating disorders.

**Negative Sexual Behaviors**

Negative sexual behaviors may also occur, due to low self-esteem. A study looking at adolescent girls ages 12 to 16 found that self-esteem scores for nonvirginal girls were significantly lower than virginal females (Spencer, Zimet, Aalsma & Orr, 2002). Adolescent girls who engage in sexual activities during adolescence are more likely to have multiple partners over the course of their lifetime and engage in negative behaviors. Multiple partners increase the risk of contracting a sexual transmitted infection, unwanted pregnancy and a decrease in self-esteem.
Adolescent girls who have a low sense of self-worth may have a harder time saying no to sexual behaviors they do not want to partake in, such as unprotected sex.

Having a low self-esteem allows these girls to be persuaded easily into behaviors that would otherwise be against their values and beliefs. Low self-esteem allows adolescent girls to engage in unhealthy relationships, where they become submissive in order to feel a sense of worth based on their partners' actions or beliefs. Adolescent girls who have a high self-esteem are able to stay true to themselves in a relationship and say no to sexual behaviors they do not wish to partake in. A high self-esteem also allows for these adolescents to stay connected to their friends while in a romantic relationship without fear of losing their self-identity.

Research has proven the link between risky sexual behaviors and low self-esteem. Having low self-esteem is correlated with undermining abstinence, monogamy and condom use (Wild, Flisher, Bhana & Lombard, 2004). The lower an adolescent girl’s self-esteem, the greater risk they are for engaging in risky sexual behaviors. Having a high self-esteem can decrease these risky behaviors and help maintain a high sense of self. Professional school counselors can help adolescent girls improve relationships between their parent, peers and others, in order to promote and support communication about positive safe sexual behaviors.

**Relationships**

Adolescent girls need practice in building good relationships. They may not know how to establish a relationship or identify the difference between a positive or negative relationship (Bingham & Stryker, 1995). Having high self-esteem helps adolescent girls identify the difference between positive and negative relationships. Those with low self-esteem often have poor relationship-building skills. School counselors can educate and provide opportunities to learn relationship-building skills. Having these skills will support and aid in the development of
adolescent girl’s self-esteem.

When one has a low self-esteem they may lose themselves in a romantic relationship resulting in an unhappy sense of self and a negative unwanted relationship. An adolescent girl will often not realize or be aware that they are in a negative relationship, due to their low self-esteem. They will allow other beliefs and values contrary to their own to occur and for their partner in their relationship to make most if not all decisions in fear that they may make the wrong decision. Not only does this lead to unwanted behaviors, but this can also lead to unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. Therefore, adolescent girls with a high self-esteem will make better decisions regarding sex as well as maintaining and engaging in positive romantic and friend relationships.

**Negative Behaviors**

Adolescent girls who have a low self-esteem have an increased chance of smoking cigarettes, drug and alcohol use (Wild, Flisher, Bhana & Lombard, 2004). Have a low self-worth allows for negative behaviors to occur because of the lack of care over what happens to one’s body or life. Professional school counselors can look at the negative behaviors occurring within the adolescent girl population at their school as a predictor of self-esteem values. An adolescent girl who is engaging in cigarette, drug and alcohol use, most likely also has a low self-esteem, which can explain the negative choices they make.

In a research study, adolescent females stated that they had engaged in behaviors knowing it could have caused a negative reputation for themselves (Lyons, Giordano, Manning & Longmore, 2001). During adolescence a strong determining factor of ones self-worth or self-esteem is based on one’s peers. If one has a low self-esteem and is partaking in negative sexual behaviors in which they know will make others look at them negatively, their self-esteem will be
affected even greater. According to this study, adolescent girls can surround themselves with other peers who have a high sense of self-worth, who have positive self-identities that will help support them in making positive sexual choices.

The more positive influences that adolescent girls are surrounded by the more support, and sense of belonging they will have, leading to making positive sexual choices that make them feel good about themselves (Lyons, Giordano, Manning & Longmore, 2001). Professional school counselors can therefore promote and support self-esteem in adolescent girls by encouraging positive relationships and teaching how to identify a healthy relationship and implement healthy relationship making skills.

**Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement is important when building adolescent girls’ self-esteem. The way one was raised often determines the way one will raise their children (Bingham & Stryker, 1995). Beliefs and values from family members influence and shape the values and beliefs that adolescent girls place on themselves regarding their level of self-esteem. Self-esteem is not something that a girl is born, with but rather acquired over time.

According to Baker, Goesling and Letendre, the more parents are involved with their students, the more positive outcomes that happen (as cited in Erford, 2010). Adolescent girls whose parents are involved with their schooling and provide a nurturing secure environment for their daughters have a higher self-esteem (Bingham & Stryker, 1995). Therefore parents play a vital role in the development of their daughter’s self-esteem.

Parents can help their daughters acquire this characteristic by loving, supporting, respecting and valuing their opinions and decisions. Asking their daughters the right questions and keeping an open form of communication are both important regarding the ongoing self-
esteem process (Bingham & Stryker, 1995). Allowing their daughters to make choices on their own while demonstrating and teaching how to make positive choices will make for daughters with higher self-esteem.

Parents can teach their daughters how to set boundaries, be discriminating, communicate, set goals and priorities, trust herself, separate fantasy from reality, project into the future, make decisions and ask questions (Bingham & Stryker, 1995). If one shuts down their daughter’s ideas they are only teaching them that they are incapable of making decisions on their own and that they do not know how to make the right choices in life. Supporting ones daughter to come to her own conclusions while leaving room for her to learn on her own is important in building up her self-esteem.

Independence and the chance to make mistakes allow for adolescent girls to learn and develop skills to problem solve on their own, while instilling a sense of capability in themselves. A father’s control that is placed on their adolescent daughters is linked to a low self-esteem for adolescent girls (Plunkett, Henry, Robinson, Behnke & Falcon, 2007). Therefore allowing adolescent girls to make their own choices and learn from their own mistakes will help allow them to develop a high self-esteem.

Parents must look at and evaluate their own self-esteem in order to support their adolescent daughters. Modeling a positive sense of self-worth is important in order to set a good example and support female’s development through their own lives. (Bingham & Stryker, 1995). If one has a low self-esteem and is making bad choices because of it or putting themselves down. They are modeling those behaviors and ideas for their daughters and teaching them that it is ok to do so. In order to teach ones daughters how to have a high self-esteem and support their self-esteem, parents must model and work on their self-esteem issues. Professional school counselors
need to therefore communicate the importance of modeling for their adolescent daughters and the large impact that has on their self-esteem journey.

**Academic Success**

One of the psychological factors related to academic failure in adolescent girl students is their vulnerable self-esteem. Having a higher self-esteem has been proven to be a contributing factor to academic success. Having positive self-beliefs about oneself, taking the initiative in academic situations and engaging in critical problem solving has been shown to increase students leaning competence (Ohrt, Webster & Garza, 2015). Having the tools and resources to achieve academic success aids in the development of adolescent girl’s self-esteem. Feeling competent about ones skills and being able to utilize them successfully will therefore help maintain and keep ones self-esteem high. Professional school counselors can help adolescent girls achieve academic success through supporting adolescent girls' beliefs about themselves.

In Ohrt, Webster and Garza’s self-esteem study, students with academic success who had higher self-beliefs about themselves also portrayed the ability to try new things and participate in critical processes while taking more of an initiative in their education. These students took pride in not only themselves, but also their academics. This means that these students value their academics and therefore try harder to achieve academic success throughout their education (Ohrt, Webster & Garza, 2015). Therefore, a high self-esteem not only benefits adolescent girls in their present academics, but sets a foundation for the rest of their education as well.

Researchers believe that academic achievement has also been linked to having a high self-esteem and that one maintains their self-esteem partially through their academic success (Ohrt, Webster & Garza, 2015). Having a positive self-belief about one’s self was positively correlated with academic success and a factor towards other achievements. Professional school
counselors can use home based involvement strategies to support their academic success, which also helps build adolescent girls self-esteem. These strategies include the parents’ engagement with their adolescent daughter’s academics at home (Ohrt, Webster & Garza, 2015). Increasing adolescent girls’ self-esteem can help towards the achievement of academic success.

Academic success provides support for adolescent females, which aids in their development of self-esteem (Toren, 2013). Parents play a crucial role in their adolescent daughter’s academics, which affects the development of self-esteem. The values and support parents provide their adolescent daughters carries on through the rest of their lives. Having academic and emotional support both at home and school allows for adolescent girls to feel encouraged and loved. The more support an adolescent girl can receive, the more likely she is to succeed in life. Professional school counselors can therefore encourage parental involvement with their student’s academic and social life to support and develop adolescent girls’ self-esteem.

Stress

Self-esteem has been proven to work as a protective factor against stress. In adolescent girls, self-esteem reduces the negative effects of stress on one’s mental health. Having high self-esteem allows for girls to maintain their mental health during stressful life events and function without negative effects. The amount of substance abuse due to stress is also decreased, because of self-esteem working as a protective factor (Chen & Foshee, 2015). Being able to handle the stress that life throws at adolescent girls is important in order to maintain mental health without engaging in risky negative behaviors. Professional school counselors can help adolescent girls manage and handle their stress appropriately by supporting and aiding in the development of high self-esteem.

Anxiety
Friedman and Bedas-Jacob observed the relationship between test anxiety and low self-esteem. When an adolescent girl feels anxious or worries, their self-image and self-worth suffer. Those who feel more confident in their abilities, therefore experience less anxiety, resulting in more positive experiences.

When adolescent girls feel capable of solving problems, and are able to make positive changes in their lives, the less anxiety they experience (Alam, 2013). This means that adolescent girls with a high self-esteem experience less anxiety and are better able to deal with the pressures and stress of their education. Less anxiety in an academic setting allows for adolescent girls to perform better on tests. The confidence and tools to succeed academically allows for less stress anxiety to occur.

**Depression**

Research has proven that a low self-esteem has been linked to and can predict depression (Ranøyen, Stenseng, Klöckner, Wallander & Jozefiak, 2015). Those with a low self-esteem often are unable to be comforted by themselves. Due to their low self-esteem, they may also not have positive relationships around them to help support them through life changes. The lower ones self-esteem becomes the greater the chance for depression to set in.

High self-esteem has been proven to work as a protective factor for adolescent female’s mental health. High-self-esteem is proven to be a contributing factor towards being able to adjust to life changes in a positive coping manner, while sustaining psychological health (Moksnes & Espnes, 2013). Not only do those with a high self-esteem have the ability to deal with changes in life on their own, but often times they also have positive resources and people around them to help as well. Self-esteem therefore is a contributing factor, in which adolescent girls judge themselves as a whole.
There are theoretical explanations for the increase of depression in adolescent girls. During this time in a girl’s life, they worry more about their external appearance and how others view them (Tripkkovic et al., 2015). Hormonal changes are occurring and adolescent females may be more sensitive to the criticism they receive from others. Treatment for depression is based on self-esteem enhancement and included getting adolescent girls to think positively about themselves to decrease the likelihood of chronic depression.

Professional school counselors play a crucial role in looking for the warning signs of depression in order to prevent chronic depression and other mental illnesses of occurring. Once those who are believed to show signs of depression or a low self-esteem, professional school counselors can contact parents and provide the appropriate resources based on the individual’s specific needs. Professional school counselors are able to work with adolescent girl’s self-esteem or depression issues at school, which allows these girls to feel support both in and out of the school system.

Several studies have also shown that adolescent girls who have depressed parents may also have a lower self-esteem compared to non-depressed parents. It was shown that depressed mothers often expressed negative attitudes towards their children, which only increased the adolescent’s self-worth (Ranøyen et al., 2015). Having a high self-esteem helps adolescent girls with the negative attitudes and comments made towards them. It is important for not only adolescent girls to have a high self-esteem, but also their parents because of the relation between parental depression and their children’s self-esteem.
Interventions

Interventions have been shown to have a positive impact on self-esteem, which also helps with adolescent girls’ mental and physical health, self-worth and eating behaviors (Tirlea, Truby & Haines, 2015). This means that school counselors can implement interventions in order to support mental and physical health as well as a positive view of self through encouraging and supporting adolescent girl’s self-esteem. There are different types of interventions that school counselors can implement including group and individual counseling, classroom curriculum and self-esteem programs.

Research has shown the link between self-esteem interventions and mental health as well as academic success, positive decision-making and healthy relationships. The more positive interactions and opportunities that adolescent girls experience, the high self-esteem they achieve (Bingham & Stryker, 1995). No two adolescent girls are the same, so it is important to modify and plan interventions based on each individual’s needs.

**Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale**

The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale is a tool used to measure self-esteem. The scale includes questions that both negatively and positively phrased. Participants answering these questions rate how much they either agree or disagree with the statement in context of themselves, based on a one to four valuing system. The higher score indicated the higher ones self-esteem and vice versa (Ohrt, Webster & Garza, 2015). This scale has been translated into 28 languages and used in 53 countries, it is the most common tool used in order to measure self-esteem (Hashimoto, Onuoha, Isaka, & Higuchi, 2011). This is a tool that professional school counselors can therefore use with a wide variety of students because of the language fluency it provides.
This scale could be handed out in a classroom setting or in an individual or group setting, based on the individuals included. Using this scale allows for insight on how the adolescent females feel about themselves and gives the school counselor a chance to look at how they answered each question in order to identify problem areas in which one's self-esteem is lacking. This means that professional school counselors would be able to come up with interventions that suit each student's needs as well as implement classroom curriculum towards self-esteem issues that are affecting a mass amount of the adolescent girl students.

**Girls on the Run Program**

Other interventions such as 2015 Girls on the Run program are also available to improve self-esteem and self-efficacy in girls. Programs such as this, target risk factors for low self-esteem and increase resilience and reduce the negative views of self. In order to achieve the goal of having a high self-esteem, adolescent girls need to feel supported and encouraged by the people around them. They must also be educated and supported to conquer negative gender stereotypes, as well as negative expectations of body image and discrimination.

This program provides the chance for adolescent girls to strengthen their skills and feel a sense of belonging, safety, and significance, while being healthy and confident (Galeotti, 2015). School Counselors can implement concepts from programs like Girls on the Run to support the development of self-esteem in a school setting. Counselors can use the knowledge from research, which proves that high self-esteem is an important contributor to mental health, academic success, positive relationships and a positive sense of self when advocating for self-esteem intervention programs in their schools.
Invisible Self-Wheel

The Invisible Self Wheel is an evidence-based model grounded in Adlerian counseling theory that emphasizes the indivisibility of the self, or what Adler called holism, and is based on a single, higher order wellness factor that includes all wellness components (Myers, Willse & Villalba, 2011). This wheel allows school counselors to identify and bring to light an adolescent girl’s strengths and areas of their lives where they exhibit a higher sense of self. Because of this, school counselors are than able to point out where ones weaknesses are in life and then work on interventions and plans to help support this area of life, through building up and supporting their self-esteem.

Having a physical representation of one’s self allows adolescent girls to see for themselves what is going on in their lives. Having strengths and weaknesses written down in front of an adolescent girl, makes them look at and acknowledge different aspects of their life. This Invisible Self Wheel would be helpful for school counselors to use, especially if they had the students fill it out themselves. This would allow the opportunity for adolescent girls to point out their own strengths and come to their own conclusions, rather than having someone else point it out for them. The wheel would allow one to see personal growth over a period of time, which would also boost adolescent girl’s self-esteem.

Education Program

The 2000 Education Program was made to improve body image through the development and strengthening of ones self-esteem. This program includes group work, curriculum, games, play and drama in order to provide a positive environment in which students receive positive feedback, while being involved socially with peers to build up their self-esteem. This program was shown to have a positive impact on adolescent girls’ body image. Being socially accepted
became less important to the adolescent females who completed the Education Program (O’Dea & Abraham, 2000). Professional School Counselors can implement programs like this to help support and aid adolescent girls’ self-esteem.

**Gender Stereotypes**

Researchers conducted a study involving adolescent girls to see whether or not gender played a part in how one views themselves. Adolescent girls in this study were shown to base their judgments about themselves off of other girls and their attributes (Patterson, 2012). This means that adolescent females will compare things such as their physical appearance and interests to other girls. Having a higher self-esteem will allow for adolescent females to make their own decisions, without letting the attributes of others negatively influence their view of self. Having a positive view of self allows these adolescent girls to choose positive friends as well as make positive choices. Professional school counselors can help adolescent girls through classroom curriculum, groups and individual counseling. This can be accomplished by building up their self-esteem through providing positive opportunities, pointing out strengths and working on their weaknesses.

Adolescent girls are brought up in a society with traditional female qualities and characteristics, unless taught otherwise. Gender stereotypes may include being submissive, taking on a motherly role while staying quiet, clean and proper. Adolescent girls want structure in their lives and therefore fall back on gender stereotypes to tell them what to do, rather than following their own path. It is important for professional school counselors to educate their students, as well as their student’s parents and teachers about gender stereotypes and how they can negatively affect an adolescent girl's feelings about themselves.
Even if an adolescent girl has the desire to act in a way considered masculine, they may stray from their own wants in order to fulfill their feminine stereotype placed on them by society (Bingham & Stryker, 1995). Discussing gender stereotypes and making others aware of the negative impact it places on adolescent girls is therefore important in order to promote a healthy self-esteem. Professional school counselors can implement and provide opportunities for young girls to engage in non-traditional female roles.

Identity

In a research study girls were asked to talk about how they identify themselves. One of the main factors regarding how they identify themselves was around being female, based on their social identity. These adolescent girls were comparing their bodies and their ideas to situations and ideas they have learned on television (Walton & Fissete, 2013). This means that media can play a negative role on how adolescent girls view themselves and cause struggles with identity, which effects self-esteem. School counselors can help protect adolescent girl’s self-esteem by educating girls and their parents about these negative influences and help support their identity.

Another interesting aspect of the study revolved around adolescent girls looking at pictures of activities, which they would then have to indicate which activity they felt represented them. When shown activities such as football or wrestling girls would say that this sport was too dangerous for females or that a female would not be strong enough to participate. When shown images such as cheerleading they would note that this activity was more suitable for females event though they would also note that these activities were also just as dangerous.

The society gender stereotype placed on these activities influenced these girls’ ideas about what they believe was appropriate for themselves as a female (Walton & Fisette, 2013). This study shows the proof between adolescent girls decision-making and beliefs based from
society’s gender stereotype beliefs. Professional school counselor can talk about these gender stereotypes and encourage girls to choose activities that fit their interests and beliefs, instead of doing what society sees fit for them to do.

Adolescent girls may try to compare themselves to other girls and if they do not fit in with their gender stereotype, they will revise their own beliefs in order to identify and make an identity for themselves. Society places gender stereotypes on adolescent girls, which cause problems in their self-identity (Walton & Fissete, 2013). Having a strong self-identity and knowing what one wants and what is important to them, allows for adolescent females to stay true to themselves.

It becomes increasingly important to distinguish self-evaluation that represents the individual, instead of evaluating ones self-adequacy based on what is expected based on their gender (Toren, 2013). With higher self-esteem, adolescent girls are able to form a self-identity and stay true to themselves. Therefore, school counselors can help adolescent girls stay true to themselves by supporting their interests and teaching self-acceptance.

School counselors can appreciate adolescent girl’s uniqueness, while also modeling and providing opportunities for girls and their peers to appreciate their unique attributes as well. Encouraging these girls to incorporate themselves and build up their self-identity will help build self-esteem (Bingham & Stryker, 1995). Allowing adolescent girls to appreciate themselves and others will aid in the development of self-esteem between girls and their peers.

**Peer Pressure**

Peer pressure plays a large role in the decision making of adolescent girls. During this stage of life adolescents look to others when deciding what to participate in and what not to participate in. Having a high self-esteem helps adolescent girls make positive decisions and say
no to behaviors they do not want to engage in. Self-esteem is an ongoing process that continues throughout ones entire life. The way adolescent females view themselves is based not only from their own thoughts and opinions, but also how others interact and view them. Those who feel that they have been accepted and respected by their peers have a higher self-esteem (Tripkovic, Roje, Krnic, Nazor, Karin & Capkun, 2015). Having a strong self-esteem helps adolescent girls make positive healthy choices regardless of what their peers are doing, compared to than those with a low self-esteem.

**Bullying**

Both victims of bullying and the bully have been shown to exhibit low self-esteem. However, victims who were frequently bullied displayed the lowest amounts of self-esteem. Having a high self-worth and strong self-esteem decreases the likelihood of becoming bullied (O’Moore & Kirkham, 2001). Therefore, professional school counselors and parents can help adolescent girls have a greater self-worth by supporting and improving their self-esteem. Bullying can be reduced both in and outside of school, by supporting the development of adolescent girl’s self-esteem. Research has proven the connection between low self-esteem and involvement in bullying.

Adolescent girls who play the role of victim and the bully exhibit even lower self-esteem than those who only play a single role in bullying. Research states that low self-esteem is due to a feeling of inadequacy, in appearance, popularity, intelligence, happiness and anxiety (O’Moore & Kirkham, 2001). Self-esteem is a protective factor of not only being bullied, but also being a bully. School counselors can support adolescent girl’s self-esteem, by providing opportunities to feel a sense of safety, significance and belonging.
Extracurricular Sport Activities

A self-esteem survey proved a stronger relationship between athletic adolescent girl’s high self-esteem and positive body image compared to inactive females. Therefore, sports and physical activity can give adolescent female a positive body image, a boost in their self-esteem, confidence and a positive impact on their mental health. Self-esteem was defined as having the following characteristics: extroverted, optimistic, communicative, open to criticism, good at problem solving and respectful of others’ differences (Dorak, 2011). Sports provide the opportunity for adolescent girls to build these positive characteristics while developing and supporting their self-esteem.

In a research study, adolescent girls who had a low self-esteem and who were not involved in sports had an increased risk of being suicidal, drinking alcohol, and being bullied (Wild, Flisher, Bhana & Lombard, 2004). Therefore, getting adolescent girls involved in sports can decrease the likelihood of such negative experiences and mental health issues from occurring. School counselors can encourage adolescent girls to get involved in sports and use such extracurricular activities to help girls who have a low self-esteem.

When involved in athletics, adolescent girls are put in an environment that challenges them to have extrovert qualities. Being an athlete means that one must be optimistic and have positive views about themselves in order to succeed in their sport. One must also communicate with teammates, coaches and others around them. Coaches and teammates will often give different sorts of criticism, which calls for the individual to use their problem solving skills to solve the issue at hand, while being respectful of others thoughts and opinions.

Being an athlete helps adolescent females work on many different components that build up ones self-esteem. Organized sports provide an environment for adolescent girls to receive
constructive feedback. They are allowed the opportunity to push themselves at both a mental and physical level. As well as being supported and surrounded by teammates, coaches and others who are partaking in the activity through participation or observation (Wagnsson, Lindwall & Gustafsson, 2014). Sports provide a positive supportive environment for adolescent girls to build up their self-esteem.

Professional school counselors can use extracurricular activities as a means to get adolescent females involved. This involvement provides these girls with positive interactions, support and encouragement as well as the opportunities to challenge themselves both physically and mentally. Getting adolescent girls involved in extracurricular activities, such as sports allows for them to feel a sense of safety, significance and belonging. Have a sense of all three of these aids in the development and support of adolescent females’ self-esteem. According to Adler, those who feel like they belong and are valued function better (Ferguson, 2010). Getting involved can help adolescent girls in multiple aspects of their lives.

The relationship between participation in sports and self-esteem has shown to have a positive effect on adolescent girls’ self-esteem and can aid in supporting their biological, psychological and social transitions through their adolescence (Wagnsson, Lindwall & Gustafsson, 2014). Therefore, getting adolescent girls involved in extracurricular activities, such as an organized sport can aid and support the development of self-esteem.

**Adlerian Concepts**

When an adolescent girl has low social interest, they set themselves apart from others. They withdraw and have low feelings of belonging. According to Alfred Adler, individuals who feel they like belong and are equal to others are able to have social interest or social feeling (Ferguson, 2010). When adolescent girls have social interest, they become involved with society
and their peers. Contributing to society and interacting with others allows for adolescent girls to build up their self-esteem through contribution. Having a sense of importance and worth build up positive healthy thoughts about oneself. Therefore adolescent girls who are involved in their community, extracurricular activities or are contributing to society feel a sense of worth and are able to build up their self-esteem through this social interest.

When adolescent girls feel a sense of belonging amongst their peers, they have a higher self-esteem. Mental health increases in individuals who feel a sense of belonging. When one does not feel like they belong, they have feelings of discouragement, anxiety, isolation and an overall low self-esteem (Ferguson, 2010). Therefore, adolescent girls need to feel a sense of belonging to maintain and develop their self-esteem.

According to Alfred Adler, all human beings have a need to belong. When human beings such as adolescent girls feel like they belong they function well (Ferguson, 2010). Having a sense of belonging aids in the development of adolescent girl’s self-esteem, by supporting their self-worth and giving them a sense of acceptance and healthy functioning. Without self-esteem, adolescent girls are less likely to feel that sense of belonging, leading to poor functioning and low mental health.

**Conclusion**

Self-esteem plays a large role in the lives of adolescent girls. It has the ability to impact them in either a negative or positive way. Having a low self-esteem can have a negative effect on adolescent girl’s identity, body image, sexual behaviors, relationships, academics, physical and mental health. Many resources and programs are available for school counselors, which help develop and improve the self-esteem of adolescent girls. School counselors can use the information provided from previous research and programs to help support and build self-esteem
of adolescent girls.
**References**


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