

The Study of Self-Esteem and Emotional States in Early Adolescence by Psychologists

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Abstract: This thesis analyzes the process of self-esteem formation in early adolescence and its relationship with emotional states based on the research of psychologists. The development of the “self-concept,” the level of self-awareness, and the problems of emotional instability during adolescence are examined from scientific perspectives. In addition, theoretical views of local and foreign psychologists are reviewed, highlighting the importance of self-esteem in personality development.

Keywords: self-esteem, early adolescence, emotional state, self-concept, personality development, psychological research.

Introduction: Early adolescence (typically 15–18 years) represents a critical turning point in psychological development. During this period, adolescents strive to see themselves among adults, seek independence, and pay increased attention to evaluating their worth and capabilities. Although this process may appear simple externally, it is internally complex: adolescents tend to be self-demanding and consider the opinions of parents, teachers, and peers as strong “measures.” Consequently, self-esteem and emotional states are closely interconnected, potentially amplifying or mitigating each other.

Self-esteem refers to an individual’s overall evaluation of their abilities, character, behavior, achievements, and shortcomings. In adolescence, it manifests through questions such as: “Who am I?”, “How am I different from others?”, “Do others respect me?”, and “What am I capable of?” The frequency of such questions increases during this period because the adolescent’s self-image is reconstructed: simple childhood perceptions are replaced by complex self-analysis. At this stage, self-esteem is often unstable: an adolescent may feel confident one day, yet a single criticism or sarcastic remark from peers can sharply reduce their

self-confidence the next.

Psychologists explain self-esteem from various theoretical perspectives. Early theories linked self-assessment with success and aspirations: if adolescents set excessively high goals but achieve little, internal dissatisfaction arises, leading to negative emotions. Conversely, setting realistic goals and achieving them enhances self-respect, positive mood, and emotional stability. Within humanistic psychology, self-esteem is closely tied to the “self-concept,” emphasizing the gap between the “real self” (current perception) and the “ideal self” (desired state). In early adolescence, the ideal self is often overly perfect: adolescents demand excellence in academics, appearance, communication, sports, and social networks. Despite natural flaws, errors, or failures, adolescents may interpret them as “I am worthless” or “I am inferior,” increasing internal conflict and emotional tension (irritability, tearfulness, low mood, anger).

From a developmental psychology perspective, adolescence is a period of identity exploration. Adolescents begin to define their future, career, life goals, and societal role. If this process is not properly guided, internal conflicts intensify, increasing emotional

instability: anxiety rises, self-blame occurs, and sometimes frustration or aggression emerges. Psychologists emphasize that self-esteem in early adolescence is not just about “liking oneself” but is fundamental for future stability, life position, and mental health.

The emotional characteristics of early adolescence include rapid and intense mood swings influenced by biological factors (hormonal changes), social factors (changing status, desire for independence), and psychological factors (self-searching, internal conflict). Low self-esteem often causes adolescents to perceive events as “threatening”: ordinary grades, mild criticism, or comparisons may deeply affect them. Common manifestations include insecurity, heightened shame, social withdrawal, feelings of “I cannot succeed,” excessive excitement, low stress tolerance, occasional aggression, or complete retreat.

On the other hand, excessively high self-esteem can also create problems, as adolescents may overestimate their abilities, resist criticism, and react strongly to failure. Psychologists recommend realistic self-assessment as optimal: adolescents recognize strengths and weaknesses without considering themselves “worthless.” Social environment significantly impacts self-esteem and emotional state: family attitudes, teacher evaluation style, peer status, comparisons, ridicule, or neglect all influence adolescents’ self-perception. Balanced praise, support, and treating failures as learning experiences enhance emotional stability.

Scientific studies by psychologists include practical recommendations: respecting the adolescent as an individual, focusing criticism on behavior rather than personality, setting achievable goals, developing emotion recognition and management skills, and teaching stress reduction methods. School psychologists play a key role in assessing self-esteem, detecting anxiety or depressive signs early, and conducting individual and group training. Psychocorrectional sessions aimed at developing a positive “self” (self-acceptance, communication skills, self-protection, goal-setting, recognizing achievements) are especially effective. Overall, research indicates that self-esteem in early adolescence acts as an “internal support” regulating emotional states: realistic and positive self-perception reduces anxiety, depression,

and aggressive reactions, whereas low self-esteem intensifies internal conflicts and mental strain.

CONCLUSION

Self-esteem and emotional states in early adolescence are closely interrelated and constitute a crucial factor in psychological stability and social adaptation. Psychological research demonstrates that low or inadequate self-esteem exacerbates anxiety, depression, stress sensitivity, and communication difficulties, while realistic and positive self-esteem enhances confidence and emotional stability. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen psychological services in educational institutions, systematically implement training and psychocorrectional programs aimed at forming a positive “self-concept,” and provide emotional support for adolescents.

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