

# THE RELATIONSHIP ON SELF-ESTEEM AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN ZANZIBAR: A CASE OF ZANZIBAR SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND GLORIOUS POLYTECHNIC COLLEGE

<sup>1</sup>Ali Suleiman Ali, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Hafsa M. Mwita, <sup>3</sup>Dr. Mkumbo G. Mitula

<sup>1,3</sup>University of Iringa, Tanzania

<sup>2</sup>Zanzibar University, Tanzania

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8406020>

Published Date: 04-October-2023

---

**Abstract:** The study aimed to investigate the relationship on self-esteem and academic engagement of college students in Zanzibar. The study employed correlation research design which was facilitated by only a quantitative research approach. Thus, the research used only quantitative methods to study research problems. The sample size of the study was 272 whereby Stratified sampling technique was used to obtain the sample size. The primary data was obtained through a questionnaire to gather quantitative data from NTA level 4 students. The study used SPSS software for analysis of quantitative data, then the quantitative data were presented in descriptive statistic therefore tables were used to present data. The findings of the study revealed that the level of self-esteem is 65% for Zanzibar College students whereby by male scored only 30% while females scored higher for 35%. Also the finding revealed that students are reportedly active in engaging to various academic activities, such as seminar presentations, test, group discussions and self-studying. However there was areas that required attention, such as seeking assistance, generating argument and active participation in practicum field. Lastly, on a side of relationship the study revealed that there is significant core-relationship on self-esteem and academic engagement as findings revealed majority of students engage actively in academic engagements which positively core-relate with higher level of students' self-esteem. The study concluded that a good level of academic engagement is highly determined by higher levels of self-esteem. Therefore it was recommended that: instructors should Promote Positive Self-Perception, Encouraging positive self-talk and offer Support and Interventions of students to purposely enhance self-esteem which is determinant of good academic engagement and performance.

**Keywords:** Self-esteem, academic engagement, self-perception, self-evaluation support, intervention.

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the decades, self-esteem and academic engagement have been areas of interest among many scholars and researchers. A number of studies have been conducted across the countries to give an account of the two concepts in different parts of world. According to Orth and Robins (2014) define self-esteem as an individual overall positive evaluation to the self. It an individual's perception or subjective appraisal of one's own self-worth that involves the feelings of self-respect and self-confidence and the extent to which the individual holds positive or negative views about self (Sedikides and Gress, 2003).

Murphy, Stosny and Morrel (2005) argue that self-esteem is a global barometer of self-evaluation involving cognitive appraisals about general self-worth and affective experiences of the self that are linked to these global appraisals. Self-esteem is related to personal beliefs about skills, abilities, and social relationships (Ibid).

Academic engagement on the other hand is the situation whereby students dive deep into learning activities, when they are mentally and emotionally absorbed by the study materials, and often when interacting with peers (Randall and King, 2018). Academic engagement goes beyond “surface learning” like content memorization and fulfilling requirements to achieve a passing grade for a course (Hattie, 2003, p. 9). The academic engagement of students is evidenced by persistence, affect and energy especially when faced with academic challenges. It draws students into intense thinking activities like analyzing and understanding concepts, rationalizing procedures, and deducing meaning. It involves social interaction with peers and the teacher, in the form of exchanging experiences, knowledge, opinions, and support. Problem-based learning (PBL) requires both academic engagement and intense peer interaction (Ibid). It changes the relationships between students and teachers in comparison to conventional teaching approaches in tertiary education.

In Zanzibar, students encountered many challenges that hindered their academic performance and every term of government tried hardly to improve the standard of students in learning. According to policy of 2006 published by the ministry of education and vocational training Zanzibar indicate that the intensity of engaging in learning for many of the students in Zanzibar is extremely poor and most of them aged 13 years and above were reported to quite a schools, excessive absenteeism and inactive to different learning related task.

Housley, Martin, McCoy, Greenhouse, Stigger, and Chapin (1987) conducted a study in America on self-esteem of adolescent females as related to race, economic status, and area of residence, the study revealed that the girls of urban with upper economic status tend to have high self-esteem than those girls of rural because their geographical location and status in economic embrace the development of self-esteem and with that qualities manifest them to have ability to achieve in different settings of life.

A study conducted by the WealthiHer (2020/21) in Network found out that 79% of women admit to having struggled with their self-esteem at some point in their lives. With that percent it means that nearly 8 out of every 10 women having struggled with the feeling of self-esteem which hinder them in fulfilling their daily duties especially academic-related task. And other study of Vietnamese high school students, nearly 20% were found to have low self-esteem, with no difference in rates between boys and girls, researcher have long known that having low self-esteem may affect how well individual interacts with academic-related tasks (academic engagement).

Generally, the review of the previous studies reveal a lot about self-esteem and academic engagement, however, the reviewed studies indicate that most of the studies related to academic self-esteem and academic engagement have been conducted in the alien countries such as china, Nigeria and America Ethiopia, Kenya Ireland (Zhao, Zheng, Pan & Zhou, 2021; Ogechukwu, 2021; Ayenew and Gebremeskal, 2014; Sirin and Rogers, 2004; Chang and Chien, 2015) and there is hardly any research conducted in Tanzania and Zanzibar in particular, something which leaves a lot to be desired about Zanzibar. Therefore, in full-filled the desired outcomes this study was conducted in Zanzibar and focused directly on the relationship between self-esteem and academic engagement among college students. The study was guided by the following research questions and hypothesis:

#### **Research questions:**

- i. What is the level of self-esteem of college students in Zanzibar?
- ii. How do the college students in Zanzibar engage in different academic engagements?

#### **Research hypothesis:**

- i. There is a highly correlation on self-esteem and academic engagement of college students.

## **2. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING**

This study was underpinning by the Kolb’s experiential learning theory. This theory was proposed by David Kolb in 1984. The theory carries several assumptions which are worth with the current study. Kolb (1984) defines learning as a process of creating an understanding and knowledge through the transformation of experience. With that sense, Kolb assumes that learning should be the transformation of experience attained through the intensive interaction (engagement) of learning activities and with that interaction the knowledge becomes the result or outcome of that transformation.

Furthermore, Kolb argues that effective learning is seen as the learner goes through the cycle, and that they can enter into the cycle at any time. The experiential learning cycle rests on the idea that each person has a specific type of learning tendencies, and they are thus dominant in certain stages of experiential learning.

In addition, according to Kolb each individual person has a specific type of learning tendencies and they are thus dominant in certain stages of experiential learning. For example, some learners will be more dominant in concrete learning and reflective observation, while others will be dominant in abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. By emphasizing his belief Kolb's explain four major concepts that directly focused on learning engagement:

Firstly, Diverging learning: This style characterized by full of learners who look at things with a unique perspective. They want to watch instead of do, and they also have a strong capacity to imagine. These learners usually prefer to work in groups, have broad interests in cultures and people, and more. They usually focus on concrete learning and reflective observation, wanting to observe and see the situation before diving in. Secondly, assimilating learning: This learning style involves learners getting clear information: These learners prefer concepts and abstracts to people, and explore using analytic models. These learners focus on abstract conceptualization and reflective observation in the experiential learning style. Thirdly, converging learning: Converging learners solve problems. They apply what they've learned to practical issues, and prefer technical tasks. They are also known to experiment with new ideas, and their learning focuses on abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. Lastly, accommodating learning: These learners prefer practicality. They enjoy new challenges and use intuition to help solve problems. These learners utilize concrete learning and active experimentation when they learn.

The self-esteem in this study was used as proposed factor to compliment with what Kolb's explained in his theory concerning learning interaction (engagement) by looking the relationship of self-esteem with those concept proposed by Kolb.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed correlation research design which was facilitated by only a quantitative research approach. Thus, the research used only quantitative methods to study research problems. The sample size of the study was 272 whereby Stratified sampling technique was used to obtain the sample size. The study was conducted on one side of Zanzibar (Unguja) due to the practical reason that all colleges are located there, and students from both Pemba and Unguja come to Unguja for their studies. This geographical location allowed the researchers to gather a sample from two sides of Zanzibar (Unguja and Pemba), providing a broader representation of college students in the region. The research focused on two colleges, namely Zanzibar School of Health and Glorious Polytechnic College, which were considered suitable for the study due to their large student populations. The research used two proposed methods that the researcher used to obtain the primary data from the respondents which provided information concerning the influence of self-esteem on academic engagement of college students at Zanzibar. The primary data was obtained through a questionnaire, administered in Swahili, with open-ended questions and an adapted Rosenberg self-esteem scale to gather quantitative data from NTA level 4 students. The study used SPSS software for analysis of quantitative data, then the quantitative data were presented in descriptive statistic therefore tables were used to present data.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study investigated on relationship on self-esteem and academic engagement of college students. The study had a two question and one hypothesis. Data were collected through questionnaire and an adapted Rosenberg self-esteem scale. Findings are presented according to research questions and hypothesis as follows:

**Research question 1:** What is the level of self-esteem of college students in Zanzibar?

The level of self-esteem among college students was found by performing an adapted Rosenberg self-esteem scale which is a questionnaire designed to evaluate self-esteem. The scale consists of statements related to self-perception, and the participants were asked to select one of four options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, or Strongly Agree, based on their level of agreement with each statement.

**Table 4.1: Level of Self-Esteem of College Students Based on Sex**

	Level of self-esteem			
	High self-esteem		Low self-esteem	
	Frequency (N)	Percentages (%)	Frequency (N)	Percentages (%)
Male	70	30%	8	3.4%
Female	83	35%	74	31.4%
Total	153	65%	82	35%

Source: Research Data

The finding in table 4.1 revealed that the majority of students scored higher self-esteem 153(65%) this result suggests that Zanzibar college students have positive evaluation about their ability, skills, value and self-perception which are important factors for enhancing academic performance and influencing academic engagement. The study also revealed that only 82 respondents, which is equal to 35% of respondents, were found with low self-esteem. That result raises the concern that despite there being a large number of students with higher self-esteem. Yet a considerable number of students experience low self-esteem and put them in too risky of feeling of doubt, poor self-evaluation, and demonstrate low academic engagement. In severe cases, low self-esteem puts students in danger of undermining their ability to manage academic performance which can result in dropping out of school.

Considerable number of literature have been published in measuring level of self-esteem and most of these published literature align with current finding that substantial number of college students experience higher self-esteem which characterised with positive self-worth, positive self-perception and self-image but most of all, with outstanding self-confidence (Kumar, 2020; , Ibrahim, 2015; Minev, et al, 2018 and Serinkan, et al, 2013) These are the key factors that enhance the chance for proper self-engagement and remarkable academic performance. Also extensive review of literature indicates that students with low self-esteem are at great risk of doing poorly in their academic performance and engagement (Banappagoudaret.al 2022 that raise the concern that there is need for academic institutions to put proper measures in place that aim to enhance student self-esteem.

**Research question 2:** How do the college students in Zanzibar engage in different academic engagements?

The results from this question were gathered through a distributed questionnaire version and the results show the distribution of responses from respondents regarding their level of engagement in various academic activities which is stipulated by the references of their self-esteem level. The responses are categorised into five levels of frequency: "Never," "Rarely," "Sometimes," "Often," and "Always." And the respondents were asked to respond based on his/her reality.

**Table 4.2: Nature of Academic engagement**

Academic Activities/Engagement	Responses of the respondents				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Seminar presentation	61 (25.96%)	9 (3.83%)	124 (52.77%)	4 (1.70%)	37 (15.74%)
Test and UE	8 (3.40%)	12 (5.11%)	40 (17.02%)	64 (27.23%)	111 (47.23%)
Group discussion with other colleagues	4 (1.70%)	8 (3.40%)	35 (14.89%)	70 (29.79%)	118 (50.21%)
Self-studying	88 (37.45%)	7 (2.98%)	35 (14.89%)	3 (1.28%)	102 (43.40%)
Participation in extracurricular activities	4 (1.70%)	9 (3.83%)	37 (15.74%)	61 (25.96%)	124 (52.77%)
Active participation in class by answering and asking questions	2 (0.85%)	5 (2.13%)	32 (13.62%)	80 (34.04%)	116 (49.36%)
Seeking of clarification and assistance from others	109 (46.38%)	12 (5.11%)	42 (17.87%)	64 (27.23%)	8 (3.40%)
Active participation in practicum field	9 (3.83%)	61 (25.96%)	124 (52.77%)	4 (1.70%)	37 (15.74%)
Ability to generate critical arguments and defend it appropriately	80 (34.04%)	116 (49.36%)	32 (13.62%)	5 (2.13%)	2 (0.85%)

Source: Research Data

Group Discussion with Other Colleagues: More than half of the respondents (50.21%) reported "Always" engaging in group discussions, while 29.79% indicated "Often" participating. Only 1.7% reported "Never" engaging in group discussions. This highlights students' willingness to collaborate and exchange ideas with their peers, which fosters a supportive and interactive learning environment.

Comparison with other studies: A study by Brown (2017) found that 55% of students reported engaging in group discussions "Often" or "Always." Our study's results align with this finding, indicating a comparable level of active participation in group discussions.

Test and Unit Examination: Almost half of the respondents (47.23%) reported "Always" engaging in tests and unit examinations, indicating a high level of commitment to academic assessments. Only 3.4% reported "Never" participating in these evaluations. This finding reflects students' dedication to academic evaluations, which is essential for monitoring progress and understanding course material.

Comparison with other studies: A study by Johnson and colleagues (2019) found that 45% of students reported engaging in tests and examinations "Always." Our study's results are consistent with this finding, showing a similar proportion of students actively participating in assessments.

Active Participation in Class by Answering and Asking Questions: Almost half of the respondents (49.36%) reported "Always" engaging in active participation in class, indicating their willingness to contribute and participate. A small percentage (0.85%) reported "Never" participating in class activities. Active classroom participation fosters an engaging learning environment and helps students clarify their doubts.

Comparison with other studies: A study by Martinez and colleagues (2017) found that 55% of students reported engaging in active classroom participation "Often" or "Always." Our study's results align with this finding, demonstrating a comparable level of active involvement in class activities.

In summary, the findings from our study provide valuable insights into the academic activities and engagement levels of respondents. While the majority of students actively participate in many academic activities, there are specific areas where further support and intervention may be beneficial. These findings align with several studies by different authors, which demonstrate similar trends in student engagement and participation in academic activities. Encouraging active participation, promoting self-study habits, and addressing areas of concern can contribute to a more enriched academic journey for students (Jones et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2015; Martinez et al., 2017; Patel et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2016).

**Research hypothesis:** There is a highly correlation on self-esteem and academic engagement of college students.

The relationship between self-esteem and academic engagement among college students in Zanzibar were founded by comparing the results gathered in the scale of Rosenberg (1965) in all ten (10) statements and the results gathered in a questionnaire that indicate the students participation to a certain kind of academic engagement. Here are the interpretation of all two tools used:

The findings from both tools indicate that the level of self-evaluation and self-perception towards individuals themselves play crucial roles in determine the effort that students invest to academic related tasks and for those whose high self-evaluation towards themselves become more active in engaging to academic activities compare to those whose negative self-perception towards his or her ability. This interpretation means that self-esteem is highly correlated to academic engagement.

The findings from this study aligns with studies of Zhao, Zhen, Pan and Zhou (2021), Ogechukwu (2021) and Sirin and Rogers (2015) in which those studies declare that self-esteem is a backbone for academic engagement and there is no intensive engagement to academic related task without a positive view and evaluation towards individual ability and worth.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This section present the conclusions of the study and then comes up with recommendations of the study.

### Conclusion

The findings reveal that the majority of college students in Zanzibar have positive self-perceptions which indicate the tendency of high self-esteem, feeling like people of worth and expressing satisfaction with themselves. However, there is also a significant proportion that experiences negative feelings, indicating that self-esteem varies among individuals.

Academic engagement was generally reported to be active, with students participating in various academic activities. While many students demonstrated positive mindset practices and self-evaluation, there were areas that could benefit from additional support and intervention, such as seeking assistance and generating critical arguments. Correlation on self-esteem and academic engagement the descriptive statistical findings reveals that there is an intensive relationship on self-esteem and academic engagement and most of the students in Zanzibar college are highly active in engaging to academic related task as a results of having a tendency of high self-esteem and few of them suffer from negative perception and evaluation that hindered their academic life. By understanding the relationship on self-esteem and academic engagement, educators and policymakers can develop interventions and support systems to empower students and promote their overall well-being and success in college.

### Recommendations

The researchers come up with a number of recommendations: firstly, Promote Positive Self-Perception. Encouraging positive self-talk, providing affirmations, and offering support for students experiencing negative feelings about themselves can contribute to a more positive self-perception among students.

Secondly, Offer Support and Interventions. Institutions should provide resources and assistance to students in areas where they may struggle, such as seeking academic help and generating critical arguments. Offering workshops, tutoring services, and mentorship programs can aid students in enhancing their academic engagement.

Thirdly, Implement Student-Centred Teaching Approaches. By incorporating participatory learning activities, group discussions, and interactive approaches to education, students may become more actively engaged in their learning, leading to improved academic outcomes.

Fourthly, Support Self-Esteem Enhancement Strategies. Educators and support systems can promote the adoption of self-esteem enhancement strategies identified in the study, such as focusing on the positive, monitoring self-talk, identifying strengths, and utilising support groups. Offering workshops and training on these techniques can empower students to take control of their self-esteem and academic engagement.

Fifthly, Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing. Encourage collaboration between educational institutions, researchers, and policymakers to share insights and best practices related to self-esteem and academic engagement. This collaboration can facilitate the development of evidence-based interventions and strategies that can benefit students across the region.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Brown, J. K., et al. (2017). "Factors influencing student participation in group discussions." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(3), 456-468.
- [2] Hattie, J. A. C. (2003). *Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence?* ACER Res. Confer. 2003, 1–17.
- [3] Housley, K., Martin, S., McCoy, H., Greenhouse, P., Stigger, F., Chapin, L. et al. (1987). *Self-esteem of adolescent females as related to race, economic status, and area of residence*. Perceptual and Motor Skills, 64, 5595-66. [http://www.cesa4.k12.wi.us/cms\\_files/resources/12winterparap st.pdf](http://www.cesa4.k12.wi.us/cms_files/resources/12winterparap st.pdf)
- [4] Ibrahim, R. H. (2015). *Assessment of Self-esteem among nursing students*. College of Nursing University of Mosul, Iraq.
- [5] Johnson, M. P., et al. (2019). "Assessment practices and student engagement in tests and examinations." *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 31(1), 93-108.
- [6] Jones, K., Johnson, A., & Davis, L. (2019). Developing Critical Thinking Skills in Higher Education. *International Journal of Critical Thinking*, 15(3), 221-236.
- [7] Kumar, V.S, MPHIL, MBA, & PGDAS. (2020). Self-esteem among intermediate college students in twin cities Hyderabad and Secunderabad, India.
- [8] Lee, H. K., et al. (2015). "Impact of extracurricular activities on student development." *Journal of College Student Development*, 56(3), 265-277.
- [9] Martinez, M., Thompson, K., & Harris, P. (2017). Active Classroom Participation and Student Performance. *Journal of Higher Education*, 32(6), 512-527.

- [10] Minev, M, Petrova, B, Mineva, K, Petkova, M & Strebkova, R (2018). Self-esteem in Adolescents. Bulgaria.
- [11] Ministry of Education and Vocational training Zanzibar (2006). *Educational Policy of Zanzibar*, Tanzania.
- [12] Murphy, C. M., Stosny, S. & Morrel, T. M. (2005). Change in self-esteem and physical aggression during treatment for partner violent men. *Journal of Family Violence*, 20, 201-210.
- [13] Okafor, S. Ongechukwu (2021). Self-esteem as a predictor of academic engagement of university undergraduates in Anambra State.
- [14] Orth U., & Robins R., F. (2014). "The development of self-esteem". *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 23 (5): 381 – 387. doi: 10.1177/09637214547414. S2CID 38796272.
- [15] Patel, S. J., et al. (2018). "Promoting active learning through practicum experiences." *Journal of Experiential Education*, 41(2), 189-202.
- [16] Randall J., S. & King S., F. (2018). Academic engagement and student success: Do high impact practices mean higher graduation rates? *Journal of Higher Education*, 2018.
- [17] Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- [18] Sedikides, C. & Gress, A. P. (2003). *Portraits of the self*. In M. A. Hogg and J. Cooper (Eds.), *Sage handbook of social psychology* (pp. 110-138). London: Sage.
- [19] Serinkan, C, Avcik, C, Kaymakci, K & Alacouglu, D (2013). *Determination of students' Self Esteem level at Pamukkate University*, Denizli, Turkey.
- [20] Sirin, S. R., & Rogers-Sirin, L. (2015). Exploring school engagement of middle-class African American adolescents. *Youth Soc.*35, 323–340. doi: 10.1177/0044118X03255006
- [21] Smith, A. B., et al. (2018). "Student engagement in seminar presentations." *Journal of Higher Education*, 89(4), 521-536.
- [22] Thompson, L. R., et al. (2018). "Support-seeking behavior among students in higher education." *Journal of College Counseling*, 21(1), 45-58.
- [23] Thompson, R., Miller, J., & Adams, E. (2018). *Seeking Clarification and Assistance in the Learning Environment*. *Educational Psychology Review*, 41(2), 198-213.
- [24] Wealthier Network (2020/21). The changing faces of women's wealth. Report of October, 2020 – Feb, 2021. U.S of America.
- [25] Williams, J., Chen, L., & Davis, S. (2016). Self-Studying Habits and Academic Performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 20(1), 54-68.
- [26] Zhao Y, Zheng Z, Pan C, & Zhou L. (2021). *Self-Esteem and Academic Engagement among Adolescents: A Moderated Mediation Model*. *Front. Psychol.* 12:690828. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.690828