

AN EXPLORATION OF ADOLESCENT SELF-CONCEPT AT A RURAL CO-ED  
SECONDARY SCHOOL IN EASTERN TRINIDAD

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### **Abstract**

This project explores adolescent self-concept at a rural co-ed secondary school in Eastern Trinidad. Although the researcher employed empirical evidence to identify students' concerns, the nature of the study is an extended literature review germane to adolescent development. Most of the theoretical perspectives explore adolescents' developmental constructs, which implicate adolescents' self-concepts. The main findings suggest that a lack of self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-control contribute to poor self-conceptions, such that the resultant internalizing reactions and externalizing behaviours can deter adolescents' holistic progression. Evidently, these outcomes result from personal developmental concerns throughout life-span progression and conflicting disquiet during social interactions. Considerations of this phenomenon are integral to addressing adolescents' personal and social concerns as well as the educational challenges encountered. Theorists, self-concept experts and researchers extensively argue for self-concept enhancement and identify implications and useful interventions. In sum, researchers' propositions for a multidimensional approach, facilitated by the qualitative research method are integral to revealing the associations between adolescents' concerns and their self-concepts. Recommendations and some propositions for further study are noted.

**Keywords:** self-concept, adolescent

**Success and failure in life largely depend on the level of self-concept of the individual concerned.**

**The more we discover this level and its relationship to the world, the more we know ourselves.**

**Such knowledge provides us with a measure of internal stability and security.**

**We can better see the directions and can stay with the realities of life.**

**Self-concept affects life style and being effected by other variables.**

**Rehman, A. (2001)**

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## CHAPTER ONE (1)

### Background

This chapter explores common concerns related to self-concept formation worldwide, regionally, locally and in the present context to emphasize the crucial need for self-concept development in the lives of adolescents.

#### *1.0 Background to the issue*

##### *1.1 Wider social context*

There is a growing concern for adolescents worldwide. In 2007, the *World Bank Document: The Promise of Youth*, revealed, “Many youths today are adversely affected by socio-economic and psychosocial variables that exist in society” (p. 9). Some contributing factors are breakdown in family life, poverty and abuse. These variables have negatively affected adolescents’ personal and social developments as evident by increases in school absenteeism and dropout, delinquency, aggression, and substance and alcohol abuse. These troubling behaviours can hinder adolescents’ successful integration into society.

The resulting psychosocial backlash may have arisen from adolescents’ inability to make successful transitions across life-span developmental stages from childhood to adolescence, while confronting biological, socio-emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and educational changes. Consequently, many adolescents have developmental concerns that can negatively affect their self-conceptions.

For many decades, self-concept has been the subject of enquiry because it forms an integral part of human development. It is significant in determining how people become, what they are, how they change, and how they make decisions (Burns, 1982; Lawrence, 1996). A crucial factor in this formation is the social domain in which adolescents live as others’ opinions affect the self-conceptions adolescents have of themselves (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934; as cited in Epstein, 1973).

Bandura (1977) affirmed that combinations of environmental and psychological conditions affect adolescents' behaviours, as they become vulnerable to social factors in their search for independence. One current theorist (Harter, 1997, as cited in La Greca & Harrison, 2005) added that peers become the primary source of social support rather than their families. New social roles emerge as peer acceptance is of great importance to adolescents' self-identity and has strong influence on psychological adjustment. As a result, non-supportive environments lead to contradictory self-descriptions and evaluations that result in unhealthy self-conceptions, while cohesive supportive interactions resulted in healthy self-conceptions and greater probabilities for success.

In his psychoanalysis of humans, Rogers, 1959 observed interactions between the whole person and the self, and identified self as the central construct in his theory (as cited in Pescitelli, 1996). He described self-concept as organised, fluid, consistent, and relational. Rogers emphasized the importance of meeting adolescents' conscious and unconscious needs towards healthy self-conceptions to confront new experiences without feeling threatened.

In 1968, Erikson's psychodynamic perspective proposed that humans encounter developmental tasks that confront them with crises. Successful transitions from one developmental stage to another depend on successful resolutions of previous crises. He identified *Adolescence* as the fifth developmental stage, in which adolescents confront 'role confusion' in trying to gain identity (as cited in Santrock, 2006). Successful transitions result in coherent self-conceptions, some measure of stability, connectedness, enthusiasm, and empowerment towards educational success. Attainments of the required intellectual capacities engage adolescents in heightened critical thinking and reasoning towards logical, autonomous decision-making. The resilience gained, facilitates confrontations of personal and social crises. In 2004, Laura, affirmed that change in self-concept sets the stage for development of a unified personal identity through

unique changes across the lifespan. Alternatively, adolescents who fail to make transitions remain in role confusion, which results in incoherent self-conceptions (as cited in Wong, 2008).

Purkey (1988) claimed that self-concept “is learned, organized and dynamic ... individuals have within themselves relatively boundless potential for developing a positive and realistic self-concept” (p. 5). He affirmed that adolescents have the potential to develop positive and realistic self-concepts if the ecosystems in which they interact can help them realize this potential.

Notably, the previous perspectives argued that self-concept relates to adolescents’ personal and social perceptions, experiences, and challenges. Considering that adolescents worldwide face negative experiences, they may have developmental concerns related to self-concept. Pittman (1993) argued for on-going growth processes that meet adolescents’ basic personal and social needs towards healthy self-conceptions, seen fundamental to unravelling and addressing adolescents’ personal and social concerns worldwide.

### *1.2 Situation of adolescents in the Caribbean*

The personal and social challenges encountered by adolescents in the Caribbean are similar to those faced by adolescents worldwide. *The Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC)* (2008) reported that several youths could no longer cope with negative experiences in their relation contexts and have exhibited emotional instability, psychological stress and other troubling reactions and behaviours. Increases in school absenteeism and dropout rates, resulted because several adolescents have to work to assist financially at home. Ultimately, many students leave school visionless, frustrated, and uncertified.

In 2005, the *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)* document noted that “Leisure time presents young people with opportunities for self-expression and relaxation; ideally, it is a time when learning and development occur; and offers a chance for young people to participate in their communities and societies” (p. 57). This perspective affirmed

the views of Larson & Verna (1999) that recognized adolescents spend more time with peers on the streets, in their communities and the wider society rather than their families. Therefore, quite a few vulnerable and marginalized adolescents succumb to risky behaviours (*World Youth Report: The Global Situation of Young People*, 2003). By extension, the report suggested that parents, practitioners, policy makers and the other key stakeholders could support the growth and development of adolescents by providing them with adequate opportunities that engage them in meaningful participation and education.

### *1.3 Situation of adolescents in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T)*

In 2001, *The National Policy on Health and Family Life Education* (HFLE) revealed that a number of socio-economic and educational challenges threaten youths' well-being. Similar concerns that are negatively affecting adolescents worldwide and regionally also seem to be negatively affecting many adolescents in T&T. In an analysis of *The Real Life Conditions and Experiences of Adolescents in the Junior Secondary School System in Trinidad* Phillips (2008), found that poverty, parental neglect and physical, verbal and sexual abuse of children at home resulted in troubling behaviours and emotional reactions among a group of adolescents in a secondary school in Trinidad. Many openly display indifference and defiance. She accounts for this by lacks of moral and spiritual values that mould adolescents' minds as they represent themselves and relate to others.

Cyrille (2008) confirmed that violent crimes, indiscipline, school absenteeism and school dropout are reaching crisis proportions in T&T. These resultant negative externalizing behaviours affect adolescents' abilities to progress academically, socially and otherwise.

In 2001, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) suggested that functional literacy rate in T&T is much lower than the 98%, which the country boasts of (as cited in Worrell, Watkins & Hall, 2008). Several students have literacy problems and are in dire need of

remediation, due to intellectual disabilities. In this regard, cognitive, behavioural and social capacities seem deficient which affects adolescent self-concept.

Notably, the government of T&T is aiming to bring the country to developed status by the year 2020 as envisioned in its *National Plan of Action for Children* (2006- 2010). One of its significant expectations is to produce citizens with a strong sense of self. They embarked on educational reform to provide citizens with opportunities to achieve educational and social competencies with the aim of becoming autonomous, productive citizens. (Kant 1790, as cited in Haq, 1995) postulated that exposure to opportunities for personal growth and advancement do result in a citizenry empowered to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives for successful integration into society.

In another vein, in response to *United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO)'s (1990) Education for All (EFA), educational reform in T&T, guaranteed every primary school child placement in the Secondary School through Universal Secondary Education (USE) (2000). However, scores of students placed in Secondary schools have literacy problems and special educational needs. Curriculum planning was therefore necessary to address the critical issues of relevant content material for students in secondary schools. In this case, implementation of the Secondary Education Modernisation Programme (SEMP) (2002) sought to cater to students' special educational needs and multiple intelligences. Emphasis is on student centred methodology and a cooperative learning environment to transform classrooms into creative learning laboratories. In addition, provisions of remediation services cater to remedial students' needs in Reading and Mathematics through the Secondary Thrust for Academic Remediation and Reengagement (STARR). Classifications of students consist of average and remedial students. Remedial students attained 30% and below 40% in the Secondary

Entrance Assessment (SEA) and participate in the STARR programme, while average students scored above 40% and participate in the SEMP.

Until now, there is little emphasis on personal/social development, seen crucial to healthy self-concept formation. Given the demands of a packed curriculum and overburdened, teachers, many find it difficult to address adolescents' alarming concerns. Among the numerous issues, is an alarming disconnect amongst families, adolescents and schools. Recognitions of these critical concerns witnessed the introduction of a governmental support system via Student Support Services (SSS) (2004) to "provide on-going support for all students to maximise their learning potential, do well at school, achieve to their capabilities and develop holistically" (p. 24) to address youths' personal/social issues through guidance and counselling services. However, the inadequacy of human capital makes it difficult to meet youths' dire needs.

Another contributing factor is the absence of parental and societal involvement and guidance. Both parents and the wider society play a vital role in providing avenues for adolescents to discover positive behaviours and reactions in the quest for healthy self-concept development.

#### *1.4 The present study*

The present study involves a co-ed Secondary School situated in a remote, rural village in eastern Trinidad. The researcher employed at the school conducted a needs analysis in June 2008 to obtain unbiased data to ascertain students' genuine needs and concerns. Corroborated data revealed the need for self-concept development.

Methodological techniques consisted of teacher/student questionnaires, student checklists, rating scales, student focus group interviews, teacher/guidance/safety officer one on one interviews. Student attendance registers disclosed that the student population is approximately 200 students. Three percent include students that scored below 40% in SEA and engage in Mathematics and English remediation classes. Sixty-five percent scored between 45% to 60%; and

32% scored about 65% to 70%. Student attendance registers also confirmed that high absenteeism has resulted in poor student response rate, which account for increasing school dropouts. Other concerns include student underachievement; indiscipline; poor learning attitudes; indifference and the inability to interact with peers and teachers on the school compound (See Appendices E, F).

Analysis of students' report cards, mark sheets and notebooks revealed that about 60% of students are performing below the average 50%, which indicate that student underachievement rate is high. Among the contributing factors are deficiencies in literacy and numeracy skills, demotivation and feelings of inferiority, which make the learning process challenging. Approximately, 76% wished they could change their appearance, which may account for more than 75% feeling uncomfortable when others look at them. More than 80% indicated that they feel fearful, worthless, neglected and misunderstood and 84% wished they were brave enough to try new things. Others perceive themselves as failures, useless and foolish. Above 80%, dislike working with their peers and described their relationships with their families, some teachers and significant others as uncomfortable and stressful (See Appendices A, B, C, D).

Students' documents, cumulative record cards and registration forms reveal that 74% live with stepparents; 10% with both parents in common law relationships; 3% in stable relationships and 13% with guardians. Lunch lists affirmed that 85% depend on Government provided breakfast and lunches and 97% rely on Government provided transport because of the unavailability of transportation facilities and inability to meet transportation costs.

Most parents/caregivers work occasionally and the meagre wages they earn are sometimes unable to sustain them so some seek government assistance. Additionally, due to their geographical status quite a few parents stay away from home during the week so some students remain unsupervised and responsible for themselves.

Given that several students live under challenging socio-economic circumstances, many work during the week, on evenings after school, and on weekends to contribute to the household and maintain themselves. This has added to the high-unexplained absences and dropout rates at the school. Statistical analysis of the dropout rates over the years revealed a persistent increase from 3% to 15% by September 2010 and the increase in unexplained absences from 5% to 20%.

Despite numerous efforts by administration and teachers to increase parental involvement and education, the response rate is low. Several parents continue to display indifference and devaluation of education. The communities in which students live mirror their unfortunate circumstances. Some churches provide opportunities to engage adolescents in developing aptitudes and interests. However, several students prefer to spend leisure time on the roadways where they encounter troubling activities. As a result, several students make inappropriate decisions and choices due to continuous exposures to negativities within their ecosystems.

Research links poor self-concept to unhealthy environmental conditions at home, in school and the wider society that impedes the learning process. Laura (2004) affirmed, "Positive educational environments, both family and school can lead to personal traits that support achievement, such as intelligence; confidence in one's abilities; the desire to succeed; and high educational aspirations" (Pang Wong, 2008, p.3). As such, environmental pressures and constraints, and the total structure of one's circumstances are keystones of an evolving, unfolding self and constitute the focus of self-concept development.

### *1.5 Summary*

The outcome of numerous risk factors seems to be several disempowered and disconnected adolescents with personal/social concerns related to self-concept. This can be accounted for by developmental delays and troubling environmental conditions. The challenge therefore is to

reconnect adolescents by fostering educational/social competencies crucial to self-concept development.

### *1.6 Justification for research of the self-concept issue*

Considerable attention given to empirical data collected from students' self-evaluations and perceptions suggested that many have similar personal/social concerns related to self-concept based on research findings in the Western world and in the Caribbean.

The plethora of literature awakened the researcher's interests on what to investigate theoretically, and presented insightful contexts towards arriving at analyses and recommendations to guide the study. Credible information regarding educational challenges and implications parallel to the findings corresponds to adolescents in the local context. Therefore, the researcher chose to do an extended literature review to explore the main themes emerging from the literature pertaining to adolescent self-concept.

### *1.7 Statement of the problem*

Empirical evidence suggests that many adolescents in the rural co-ed Secondary school in Eastern Trinidad have personal and social concerns related to self-concept. For this reason, the self-concept issue deserves exploration because of its potential to provide holistic understandings of students' reality, the educational challenges encountered and the educational implications it presents towards human development.

### *1.8 Summary statement of the problem*

Self-concept, understood as the evaluations of the multidimensional aspects of self, developed throughout adolescents' personal and social experiences, is integral to addressing adolescents' personal/social concerns; identifying their educational challenges and determining educational implications.

### *1.9 Purpose of the research*

The purpose of this extended literature review is to explore adolescent self-concept to illuminate adolescents' personal/social concerns that has the potential to provide holistic understandings of adolescents' reality and the educational challenges and implications related to healthy adolescent self-concept formation.

### *1.10 Major research question*

What are the main themes emerging from the literature pertaining to adolescent self-concept as relevant to their personal/social concerns and the educational challenges those adolescents of the rural, co-ed Secondary School in Trinidad encounter?

#### *1.10.1 Sub questions*

- a. What does the literature in the western world reveal about adolescent self-concept?
- b. How do the findings of the previous research question relate to adolescents' self-concept in the present rural co-ed secondary school in Trinidad?
- c. What educational implications arise from the findings?

### *1.11 Challenges in the Conduct of the Study*

In order to gain profound insights into the self-concept issue and clear directions to the course of this study, an extensive library based theoretical research process ensued, which was time consuming and challenging. At times, texts relative to the self-concept phenomenon were unavailable at the School of Education and Main Campus Libraries at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus (UWI) where the researcher is a student. Consequently, the researcher had to explore various forms of data collection by purchasing and borrowing books from academic libraries at UWI and colleagues in education. Other forms included the readings of journal articles, masters' theses and dissertations related to the fields of psychology and sociology, adolescent development, self-concept, self-esteem and identity formation.

Most of the search done via electronic means broadened the examination of concepts and ideas at UWI academic library databases. However, attempts to read articles there proved futile at times because of time constraints, logistics and availability of material. As a result, internet access became the alternative means of data collection, which supported the researcher efficiently.

Several attempts made to access UWI's search engine from home proved futile despite seeking UWI's helpdesk. Added to this, the researcher's geographical location made the task more burdensome and financially constraining because it meant more visits to UWI to access journals. Sharing concerns with peers allowed the opportunity to logon to their electronic libraries, which included The Morris Library, Southern Illinois; The St. Joseph Library, New York and The Questia Library. Internet access proved to be liberating because the researcher was able to explore worldviews with ease to gain profound insights and accumulate a plethora of literature and wealth of knowledge.

#### *1.12 Expected outcomes*

The extensive overview of adolescent self-concept can sensitize teachers, parents and other key stakeholders to address adolescents' personal/social concerns towards self-concept enhancement.

Families and teachers will recognize the need to provide supportive environments to meet adolescents' personal, social and educational needs.

Teachers and other key stakeholders in education will recognize the urgent need to create policies and practices that encourage healthy intra/inter personal development.

In sum, the findings of this study can arouse all stakeholders in education of the need for self-concept assessment and enhancement from pre-schools to secondary schools nationwide.

### 1.13 Operational definition of key terms

*Adolescence:* the period of development between childhood and adulthood, during which adolescents confront biological, psychological, socio-emotional and psychosocial concerns.

*Adolescent:* an individual between the developmental stages of childhood and adulthood.

*Self-concept:* the descriptions, evaluations and perceptions of the multidimensional aspects of self, influenced, organised and developed through individual's personal/social experiences.

*Self-image:* evaluation of physical characteristics and appearance.

*Self-awareness:* knowledge and understanding of the personal/internal world of self (inner feelings/emotions, needs, likes/dislikes) and the social, external world outside of self.

*Self-esteem:* measure of value and general feelings about one's levels of aspirations, motivations, confidence, skills and achievements.

*Self-efficacy:* belief in one's capacity to succeed in and perform specific tasks.

*Self-control:* conscious and determined capacity to behave calmly and sensibly with autonomy regardless of challenging situations that arise.

*Self-will:* determination to perform any task despite the consequences.

*Self-worth:* significance or importance one attaches to self.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Methodology

This chapter rationalises the purpose of the extended literature review, draws parallels between the qualitative research method and the extended review's research process. Then, the search procedure discussed. After which, identifications of themes as evident in the literature noted, and propositions for the qualitative research method in the study of self-concept considered.

#### *2.1 Rationale for the appropriateness of the extended literature review*

An extended literature review allows researchers to extensively explore and gain profound insights into existing wealth of knowledge that captures theoretical perspectives and research findings related to an issue in a particular field Toncich (2006-2007). In this context, research findings illuminated insightful understandings and educational implications regarding adolescent self-concept; gave future directions towards the actual research and substantiated the researcher's rationale for doing an extended literature review.

In trying to collate data, intellectual discussions with colleagues in education-broadened ideas to further gauge the research process using their libraries. The extensive library based theoretical research process included The Morris Library, Southern Illinois; the St. Joseph Library, New York; the online Questia Library and both Main Library and School of Education Library, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus (UWI). Vast means of databases, books, journal articles, masters' theses related to the fields of psychology and sociology.

Western researchers' perspectives warrant the imperative need for adolescent self-concept development and articulate the educational implications thereof. In comparison, the paucity of research done in the local context apart from studies done by Baker (1989), Jules (1998) & Worrell, Watkins, Hall (2008), on concerns related to adolescent self-concept propelled the researcher to adopt self-concept experts and researchers' views in the western world.

## *2.2 Applying the qualitative paradigm to the extended literature review process*

The researcher adopted criteria from the qualitative paradigm to guide the extended literature review process.

The extended literature review process is similar to the interpretive tradition of enquiry that gathers rich, thick, in-depth data to achieve contextual, knowledge as relevant to Wellington's (2000) description of the qualitative paradigm. The informative databases are authentic, credible and representative of theoretical perspectives of the western world, that present genuine accounts of the subject matter. By this means, the researcher gained subjective understanding and comprehensive insights into adolescent self-concept and the educational challenges and implications involved. As a result, the research process motivated and engaged the researcher to immerse the whole self as purported by Corbin & Strauss (2007), to respond to the research question formulated for this study.

The researcher gave considerable attention to comprehensive probing and analysis to ensure she gained profound insight into the self-concept issue. Toncich (2006-2007, p. 140) affirmed:

An important element of the literature review process is to be able to sort through a wide variety of data, and to determine which elements of that data are validated facts, and which are opinions or discredited or proven theories. This evaluation and validation has to be achieved while maintaining an impartial perspective.

Relying on Toncich's principles, the researcher avoided biases and preconceptions that might have fabricated theoretical perspectives.

Curtin & Fossey (2007) espoused six criteria of trustworthiness involved in qualitative research some of which are applicable in doing an extended literature review. Research findings were collated, analysed, corroborated and triangulated to arrive at rich, thick descriptions of theoretical concepts. During the inductive processes themes arose that responded to the aims of the study that structured the literature review and directed the study (Corbin & Strauss 2007).

To validate the research process, a supervisor substantiated findings. This humanistic, interactive collaboration between researcher and supervisor allowed them to discuss and highlight concerns related to the research. His supervision guided the process and enabled the researcher to framework the extensive literature review.

### *2.3 Search procedure*

The researcher used a funnel approach to collect data related to adolescent self-concept. The initial broad literature review began in December 2008 using general textbooks from the UWI libraries, national/school libraries, colleagues in education and academic bookshops. In some instances, the reading and purchasing of books occurred online using various search engines via internet services at home.

Further clarification of the framework for the research project, resulted from perusal of master theses and unpublished doctoral papers at the UWI School of Education library to widen the scope on educational research. The researcher attended research seminars at UWI to understand project's structure and educational research methods that caused her to engage in deep introspection with the aim of bringing something new to the research process.

As the funnel narrowed, internet databases located scholarly journal articles, academic papers, Government publications, worldwide documents, theses and dissertations on key topics related to the issue in portable document format (pdf) provided by the Adobe System. Broad terms identified additional terminology in varying combinations. Journal articles were accessed through

EBSCO which linked to PsycINFO, ERIC and many other databases, ‘findarticles’, ‘Questia’, & ‘Sage’.

#### *2.4 Themes arising out of the literature*

The researcher used a thematic approach to structure the extended literature found. From the onset, ‘*definitions of self-concept*’ explore complementary views that formulate a ‘*self-concept definition*’ for the study. Contrasting views of the ‘*uni-dimensional and multidimensional perspectives*’ argue for a multidimensional approach to self-concept. Then, ‘*theoretical perspectives*’ explore adolescent transitions. Following that, research findings review ‘*self-concept and its multidimensional constructs*’. After which ‘*research findings related to self-concept in T&T*’ explored. Finally, linkages with the background of the study sight ‘*educational challenges and implications*’ towards healthy self-conceptions.

#### *2.5 Proposition for the qualitative research method for future study*

In view of the fact that the qualitative research method is a multi-method focus, which utilizes a number of philosophical principles, designs and methodological processes and techniques related to human and social psychology (Creswell, 2008) the researcher recommends that this method be employed in future investigations of self-concept. Wellington (2000) affirmed that this naturalistic, interactive, humanistic, interpretive-like tradition of enquiry argues that reality is a human construct. This human centred approach “... is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2008, p. 4). Clearly, the essence of phenomena depends on meanings adolescents make of their personal/social experiences.

Methodological techniques such as documents, interviews and observations can facilitate profound illuminations and conceptualizations of adolescent self-concept. Given that close participation, association and collaboration occur between the researcher and the researched, in-

depth data emerge, to achieve contextual, situational and interactional knowledge. In so doing, subjective understanding and comprehensive insights into adolescent self-concept and the educational challenges experienced, are attainable.

Yin (2008) posits, “The case study method allows investigators to retain holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (p. 4). Thus, the researcher recommends a case study design to collate data concerning self-concept because it allows for intensive exploration, interpretation and analysis of the phenomenon within its real-life context. Case exploration bounded within a specified area lasts for a specific period in a particular situation and natural setting of the sample. This allows multi-case analysis, to make comparisons in the study’s setting where there are males and females and different categories of students to explore differences within and between cases (Merriam, 1998).

The researcher becomes actively involved as observer and participant and can note participants’ personal descriptions and social interactions to create meaningful narrative for the study. As proposed by Creswell (2008), the researcher can use participants’ vignettes to provide evidence of their perspectives.

Bogdan & Biklen (1982) likened the case study to a funnel, the start of the study being the wide end, which narrows as the case study begins (Wellington, 2000). The inductive approach that Merriam (1998) further identifies as *heuristic* will permit the researcher as primary data collector and analyser, to respond to the background of the study and adapt to changing circumstances as the study evolves.

Data collection strategies include document analysis, one on one interview, focus group interviews, and field observations to gain in-depth understanding of participants and the related issue. Corroboration and triangulation of transcribed data from every source organised into

categories where themes emerge create clearer patterns, clarify and enhance validity of findings and increase credibility of conclusions.

In 2001, Davidson employed qualitative methodology and affirmed that observations and in-depth interviews were crucial in illuminating how learning through adventure improved boys' self-concepts and afforded them opportunities to gain intrinsic motivation and self-will.

Tsui's (2002) qualitative study revealed that interviews and observations effectively evaluated students' cognitive autonomy because these techniques engaged students in critical thought and discussion through verbal or written self-expressions.

Miller (2008) used the qualitative approach to interpret underprivileged adolescents' self-concepts of a youth centre. Miller found that the methodological techniques were realistic and self-generated and formed a theory about adolescents' self-concept levels. Both Davidson & Miller found that the qualitative case study design and methodological approaches responded to the research questions for their studies and fulfilled the rationale for qualitative research.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter explores perspectives and concerns relating to 'self-concept'. From the onset, postulations of self-concept definitions examine the nexus between integrative, multidimensional and theoretical perspectives, and their relationship to the challenges in adolescent development. Then, reviews of studies explore the associations between self-concept and the personal/social selves. Useful interventions, in the promotion of self-concept development are illuminated that can be proffered for future use.

#### *3.1 Definitions of self-concept*

Given the complexity and diverse thoughts of self-concept, different theorists posited several definitions. Rogers, (1951) proposed that self-concept is "... an organized, fluid, but consistent conceptual pattern of perceptions of characteristics and relationships of the 'I' or the 'me,' together with values attached to these concepts [p. 498]" (as cited in Epstein, 1973, p. 3.). Conversely, Sullivan (1953) viewed self-concept as "an organization of educative experience, called into being by the necessity to avoid or to minimize incidents of anxiety [p. 165]," (as cited in Epstein, 1973, p. 3). Later, in 1992, Gross purported that self-concept relates to, "The same person, the same self, is viewed as subject and object, knower and known, thinker and thought about, seer and seen ... (p. 607)". Then, Lawrence (1996) defined self-concept by examining self-image of what a person is; ideal self, which the person desires to be; and self-esteem, what the person knows and feels about self and the struggle he or she faces in striving to become what he or she would like to be. Subsequently, Frydenberg (1997) expressed that "Self-concept, one's ideas and perceptions about oneself, is an important factor in determining human behaviour. (p. 75)"

### *3.2 Self-concept defined for the purpose of this study*

Based on the commonalities and diverse views that defined self-concept above, an integrated and operational definition posited as, “the descriptions, evaluations and perceptions of the multidimensional aspects of self, all influenced, organised and developed through the personal and social experiences of individuals.”

### *3.3 Uni-dimensional versus multidimensional perspectives on self-concept*

Rosenberg (1965) and Baumeister et al (2003) attempted to achieve a uni-dimensional measure of self-esteem that they considered as the global component of self-concept. Other contemporary researchers argued for a multidimensional perspective through explorations of adolescents’ personal/social experiences. Marsh & Parker (2005) found that:

specific domains of self-concept allow for a more thorough understanding of the self across contexts; are better able to predict behaviour; better measure for the efficacy of treatment interventions and provide the best context for integration with other constructs than any global measure of self-concept.

Their arguments propose that a multidimensional perspective allows for the illumination of varied aspects of persons’ personal and social aspects that in turn reveals the complex and dynamic organisations of adolescents’ self-concepts.

James (1910) proposed a multidimensional view of self-concept through explorations of person’s material, social and spiritual dimensions influenced by environmental conditions. He identified associations between the self as subject, or ‘I’; and as object or ‘me’ and found that the ‘I’ has the capacity to evaluate and have personal expectations and feelings about the ‘me’. This suggests that individuals have the potential to organize and shape their concepts of self (Epstein

1973, p. 2). The 'I' is intimately known as the material self or self-image. The social self includes social roles portrayed during relational interactions and spiritual self includes the positive/negative emotions, interests and reactions.

Harter (1990) adopted a multidimensional view of adolescent self-concept by developing a self-perception profile for adolescents and argued that multiple self-descriptions vary across social contexts. Other contemporary researchers Byrne, 1996; Hattie, 1992; Marsh, 1993 and Marsh & Craven 1997, 2006 among others also argued for a dynamic, multidimensional view. They believed that a single, global perspective of self is limited because it may inadequately inform them of new and significant opportunities of investigation. Similarly, DuBois & Hirsch, (2000) and Marsh & Craven (2006) argued for a multidimensional view of self-concept and added that it highlights the associations between each dimension and adolescents' developmental aspects as well. Therefore, researchers in education should consider multiple dimensions of self-concept to gain holistic views of adolescents' personal/social selves.

(Marsh, & Craven, 1997 as cited in Marsh, & Parker, 2005) confirmed that "specific domains of self-concept allow for a more thorough understanding of the self across contexts; are better able to predict behaviour; better measure for the efficacy of treatment interventions and provide the best context for integration with other constructs than any global measure of self-concept" (p. 4). Their arguments for investigations into self-concept through a multidimensional approach affirm that researchers will gain a holistic picture of adolescents' personal and social selves and can reveal their strengths and weaknesses as well. Profound insights gained enable researchers to make recommendations towards the development, creation and implementation of interventions geared to self-concept enhancement in the quest to maximise human potential.

The literature does argue for a multidimensional approach, which can result in improvements in self-concept evaluations because it consists of the real and perceived aspects of

adolescents' personal and social selves. In addition, knowledge of each dimension will enable educators to formulate interventions related to illuminated concerns. In support of this view, Hattie (1992) affirmed that global measures might give distorted judgments of self, whereas evaluations of specific dimensions may be more effective in identifying concerns and determining self-concepts. To this end and for purposes of this study, the researcher chose to investigate self-concept as a multidimensional construct. The exploration of the multiple dimensions of self-concept include self-image, self-worth, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-control, self-will and self-awareness, fundamental to addressing adolescents' personal and social concerns.

### *3.4 Disciplinary perspectives on self-concept development*

Self-concept is central in psychological, sociological, psychoanalytical and psychosocial developments and relate to adolescents' multidimensional aspects. Rosenberg (1989) stated "For psychology, self-concept is a major component of individual cognition; for sociology, it is both a social product and a social force; for psychoanalysis, it is a source of psychological stress and conflict" (p. 34). Considerations of the four disciplines argue for multidimensional views of self and can formulate in-depth understandings of adolescent self-concept.

#### *3.4.1 A psychological perspective on self-concept*

A number of key researchers in the field of psychology have discovered that self-concept reflects individuals' descriptive, evaluative and adaptive aspects resulting from others' conflicting views. By adopting psychological views Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1989, 1995, 1997, 2003; Epstein, 1973, 1983; Hattie, 1992; James, 1910; Kohlberg 1966; Rohner, 1980 explored individuals' cognitive, behavioural and affective domains. They suggested that self-descriptions and evaluations relate to thoughts, feelings, beliefs and behaviours, influenced by others.

(James, 1910, as cited in Epstein, 1973 p. 2) identified that associations exist between the self as subject, 'knower' or 'I'; and as 'object of what is known' or 'me'. The 'I's self-concept is

related to the multiple aspects of the material, social, and spiritual selves or the 'me', while the 'I' has the capacity to describe, evaluate and have personal expectations and feelings about the 'me'. For this reason, individuals have the potential to organize and shape their concepts of self. Persons with high self-expectations and evaluations tend to have higher self-esteems than those with deficient self-perceptions and others' may have difficulty influencing them. The material self-known as the subject's body or self-image includes the physique, feelings and actions, intimately known by the 'I'. Personal possessions, immediate family members and the home environment are highly influential in adolescents' evaluations of self-images, which in turn shape personal self.

The social self consists of the various social roles portrayed during relational interactions, to gain others' approval. The spiritual self includes the positive and negative emotions, interests and reactions. In short, the views persons have of these aspects heighten or lower the multidimensional aspects of self-concept. In this context, the organizations, interpretations, integrations and dynamism of the multidimensional aspects shape adolescents' self-concepts, which determine their successes, failures and endurance.

(Kohlberg's, 1966, as cited in Kroger, 1996) moral reasoning theory promoted moral behaviour, moral decision-making and moral conflict resolution. Although this theory does not speak directly to self-concept formation, it indirectly points to the development of self-control, self-respect, and the awareness of the social roles and principles of persons. Kohlberg noted that moral decision-making involves cognitive development, which is crucial to attaining rational thinking. By this means, persons who think before they act can exercise self-control and respect for self and others. In so doing, they understand right from wrong and develop a greater willingness to accept the consequences of their actions. His proposal for the reinforcement of ethical principles at home, school and other social contexts, is crucial to fostering respect for socially agreed standards that promote justice, human dignity and equality.

Epstein (1973, 1983) examined the impact of cognitive processes on behaviours, attitudes and thoughts and revealed that these shape individuals self-concepts. Cognitive processes include the capacity to critically analyse and interpret situations and events, organize information, solve problems, and use reasoning skills to make decisions and choices. According to how well individuals acquire and use these skills during their social experiences and functions, determine the self-concepts formed. Individuals begin to understand personal self and their relation to the social world, and are able to maintain a balance between pleasure and pain to achieve emotional satisfaction. The self-awareness achieved heightens self-esteems, worth and controls, which propel individuals to persevere and achieve in spite of challenges met.

In 1986, Bandura posited that cognitive processes are fundamental in the acquisition and retention of new behaviour patterns and in the formation and reinforcement of efficacies. In 1989, he established that self-efficacy is fundamental to the enhancement of cognition and performance. Later in 1995, Bandura defined self-efficacy, as the belief and capacity persons have to exercise control over conflicting events that affect their lives. Furthermore, self-efficacy beliefs engage cognitive, motivational, affective, and decisional processes that affect human behaviour (Bandura, 2003). Adolescents and their social relations therefore have the intrinsic power to accomplish change through self-efficacy and empowerment. Self-efficacy and outcome expectations gained, positively influence and guide adolescents' behaviours, attitudes, goals and accomplishments. In the context of this theory, provisions for adolescents to engage in opportunities and experiences can significantly influence their self-efficacies.

Conversely, (Rohner, 1980, as cited in Mrug, & Wallender, 2002) suggested that feelings of rejection or acceptance that persons experience during their social interactions, affect their self-evaluations and perceptions. Feelings of rejection can lead to aggression, delinquency, isolation and negative views self. In contrast, feelings of acceptance can have outcomes of greater

emotional stability, thus healthy, positive behaviours. In relation to Epstein's and James' views, if persons are taught to organize, interpret and confront their feelings, limitations, and other personal and social concerns, they will be better equipped to overcome the negative impacts of rejection, neglect and abuse experienced during social interactions.

#### *3.4.2 A psychoanalytical perspective on self-concept*

Some self-concept experts who adopted a psychoanalytical perspective on self-concept Freud, 1856-1939; Alder, 1963; Bandura, 1977a; Laing, 1961; Rogers, 1951; Sullivan, 1953 posit that self-concept can be affected by adverse life circumstances and experiences predominantly within individuals' Microsystems. Experiences of internal, biological and socio-emotional conflicts at each developmental stage influence self-concept development. Individuals compare self-images to ideal selves or the kinds of persons they wish to become. Individuals can thus attain self-understanding through exploration of the innermost layers of the human mind to focus on the conscious and unconscious selves, rather than the social world. Consequently, individuals can make associations and differentiations between the conscious and unconscious selves, where explorations of the conscious self occurs to tap into the unconscious self, to get to the source of adolescents' conflicting concerns.

In his psychoanalytical theory (Freud, 1856-1939, as cited in Murray, 2000) proposed three (3) levels of awareness; conscious awareness identified as 'ego', preconscious as the 'superego' and unconscious as the 'id'. In 2006, Santrock described the 'ego' as that aspect of conscious awareness that deals with reality, the 'superego' as conscience, and the 'id' as unconscious. He established that traumatic, past events repressed in the unconscious mind can be dealt with through therapy. In a further analysis of Freud's theory, Gergen (1971) pointed out that defence mechanisms; the relationship of consciousness to others in the social world; and the inculcation of

moral values were considered in personality development, which are crucial in the exploration of self-concept.

(Rogers, 1951, as cited in Hattie, 1992 p. 34) identified self-concept as “the perceptions, characteristics, and abilities; the precepts and concepts of the self in relation to others and to the environment; the value qualities which are perceived as associated with experiences and objects; and the goals and ideals which are perceived as having positive or negative variance.” Rogers maintained that every individual should aim to become who they are instead of becoming what others think they should be. His claim suggests that the masks worn by individuals hide who they really are and instead of deceiving others, they deceive themselves. For this reason, adolescents have the potential to gain conscious self-awareness where the ‘I’ gets to know the ‘me’. This process of self-discovery involves an exploration of the unconscious towards getting to the root cause of the obstacles and conflicts that prevent healthy self-concept formation.

In contrast, Sullivan (1953) believed that bodily pleasure or pain; result from treatments given by the mother and other family members during prenatal and postnatal care, which influence the self-evaluations of feelings, values and other self-descriptions. Sullivan’s observations of persons’ interactions within their Microsystems rather than society, led him to adopt a psychoanalytical view, which indicated that these experiences lead to conscious and unconscious thoughts. Furthermore, these thoughts cause persons to develop defence mechanisms and personifications. While defence mechanisms seem crucial to reducing anxiety, they resulted in misperceptions of reality as well, resulting in feelings of rejection and neglect among others. He recommended that individuals learn how to focus their minds away from stressful situations through mental images or ‘personifications’ of self, described as the ‘bad me,’ the ‘good me’ and the ‘not me’. The ‘bad me’ are the negative aspects individuals keep hidden from self and others because they cause anxiety. The ‘good me’ are the positive aspects individuals like about

themselves which they feel comfortable to display because they cause no anxiety. The 'not me' are those aspects individuals refuse to acknowledge about themselves that are buried deep into the unconscious.

Discovery of consciousness of self, results in self-discovery (Laing, 1961 as cited in Hattie, 1992). He believed that persons become who they really are when they are alone. Alternatively, while interacting with others, some persons become what others want them to be. Individuals ultimately perform various roles and wear many masks. In pretending to be who they are not, they consistently try to meet the expectations of others. For many, it is an uncomfortable and wearisome task; resulting in many individuals being unhappy with themselves. Like Rogers, Liang suggested that in order to overcome the dilemmas, persons must be true to self. In their moments of self-discovery, they must accept who they are to confront what they pretend to be. For this reason, adolescents who discover consciousness of self, gain the autonomy they need to overcome the barriers that hinder healthy self-concept formation.

In a metaphorical view, Alder (1963) described self-concept as both the artist and the picture. The artists or individuals have the potentials to know and develop who they want to become. The pictures or outcomes created by artists epitomize the self-concepts formed. Within these shaped self-concepts are various factors that relate to the personal and social aspects of individuals; accounting for the uniqueness and complexity of every individual. Consequently, when investigating adolescents, self-concepts researchers should seek to understand the multiplicity of their beings. In so doing, interrelationships between the multiple domains of self that embodies their self-concepts illuminate.

In an examination of self-efficacy beliefs, (Bandura, 1977a, as cited in Novak & Pelaez, 2004) found that, self-efficacy verbal statements are central in coping with stressful situations and underlying successful therapeutic interventions. He outlined that self-efficacy enhancement is

possible through motivation, which results in positive self-statements to perform and accomplish tasks. Engagements in conscious, positive self-talk transfer positive thinking to the unconscious and heighten adolescents' self-confidence, worth, esteems and wills. Self-motivations propel individuals to take control of their reactions. The self-efficacies gained drive them to seek alternative, positive ways of coping with negativity and overcoming challenges. Epstein (1992) affirmed the significance of this perspective regarding self-concept. He proposed that incorporations of psychoanalytic and social cognitive self-theories engage individuals in observing and processing behaviours in awareness, towards self-motivation and maintenance of coherent self-conceptions.

#### *3.4.3 A sociological perspective on self-concept*

Researchers in the field of sociology, Cooley, 1902; Harrè, 1979, 1983b; Harter, 1999; Mead, 1934; Rosenberg, 1986, examined the relationship between the individual and society and proposed that self-concept is a personal phenomenon informed by the social environment; thus, self-concept is a product of the values, standards and beliefs of individuals' social environments. Positive educational home, school and community environments result in healthy self-concepts.

(Cooley, 1902, as cited in Harter, 1999) introduced the "looking glass self" and revealed that individuals incorporate the opinions and attitudes of others in their self-descriptions, evaluations and perceptions. He attested that emotionally stable persons are self-aware, have healthy self-worth and esteems. They use their cognitive abilities to identify their uniqueness, so others' opinions cannot easily sway them.

Similarly, (Mead, 1934, as cited in Harter, 1999) identified that others' opinions and judgements can affect persons' self-evaluations and added that persons have the dynamism to organize their self-concepts. He contended that there is a continual adaptation of the self, regarding the 'I' and the 'me', which enables individuals to distinguish personal self from social

self. Mead described the 'I' as the innate, dynamic, personal self and the 'me' as the shared, social self. He suggested that the cognitive ability of the 'I' is to engage in self-evaluations during social interactions to maintain self-awareness and esteem known as the personal self. In contrast, the social self is the dynamic capacity to adopt roles to suit different situations.

Harrè, (1979, 1986b) proposed that self-concepts relate to the kinds of situations persons get involved in. Persons who have the innate capacity to interpret others and situations during social interactions counteract negative outcomes and influences. Like Mead, Harrè reinforced that persons can transcend roles they perform by adopting different roles to suit different situations. To do this, persons can integrate both their psychological, cognitive structures and sociological processes to make distinctions and connections, to listen, observe, analyse, interpret and choose events and persons with whom they interact.

Rosenberg (1986) & Harter (1999) argued that adolescents desperately seek different means of gaining the approval of others during their various social interactions within their ecosystems. This can result in changing inconsistent views of personal self and the creation of socially constructed multiple selves. The formation of unfavourable opinions of the personal self, and inconsistencies between the adopted social roles can result in false self-behaviours. In turn, individuals remain confused and unsure about whom they are.

#### *3.4.4 A psychosocial perspective on self-concept*

Psychosocial theorists Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966, 1980 argued that identity or self-concept formation occurred in stages and indicated that developmental concerns play a fundamental role in self-concept formation. Successful transitions from one developmental stage to the next result in the development of psychosocial concerns such as identity formation also identified as healthy conceptions of self, autonomy, intimacy, sexuality and achievement, while unsuccessful transitions hinder progression. Regarding adolescents' search for independence and

identity, they indicated that biological, cognitive, emotional and social factors impact on self-concept formation. They also revealed that adolescents become detached from their families and rely on peers and other societal members for support, approval and belongingness. Therefore, the opinions of peers and others become highly influential in forming self-perceptions, descriptions and evaluations.

Humanists argued for the nurturing of adolescents with the basic hierarchy of physiological, safety and belongingness needs to form healthy self-concepts (Maslow, 1970, as cited in Murray, 2000). Healthy nurturing of adolescents is imperative towards their educational advancement and achievement of desired goals. In addition, given the proper guidance, counselling and support, they will be motivated to make autonomous decisions and choices during their performance of developmental tasks and transitions.

The belief that internal biological developments move individuals from one stage of development to the next is shared by Rosenberg (1989) and Erikson, 1959 (as cited in Steinberg, 1993). Erikson's major emphasis was however on psychosocial development. Unlike Freudians who emphasized that the 'id' dominated instinctual urges Erikson focused on the 'ego', which he believed regulated thoughts, emotions and behaviour. Erikson (1968) suggested that identity or self-concept formation is a process that occurs in stages. Successful transitions from one stage to the other lead to healthy self-conceptions. He distinguished between 'introjections' during infancy and 'identification' in childhood, thereby proposing that conceptions of self are shaped by the nurturing of parents and significant others. The search for, and establishment of identity occurred during 'adolescence'. He viewed this stage as a turbulent period for adolescents in which they confront 'role confusion' in trying to gain identity.

In contrast, Marcia (1966, 1980) proposed four ways in which adolescents' self-conceptions occur. Given that adolescents are dependent on peers and others for support, approval

and belongingness, he acknowledged that their views become highly influential in their self-perceptions. Since this is so, many adolescents have no great desire to search for identity and remain unsure about whom they are. This 'diffusion' leaves them unsettled and aimless, which negatively affects their self-esteem and efficacy. In contrast, those at the 'moratorium' stage try to establish identity by exploring various alternatives that will gain them positive and healthy self-conceptions. In turn, the knowledge of personal and social selves increases self-awareness and gives them a sense of autonomy, stability and purpose.

### *3.5 Summary*

The disciplinary perspectives argue that self-concept is not simply what adolescents think, feel or know about themselves; it involves the associations between what they experience during their social interactions and how social systems regard them as well. To this end, the researcher acknowledges that explorations of adolescent self-concept involve integrations of the four named disciplines, which allows for examinations and descriptions of adolescent self-concept.

### *3.6 Theoretical perspectives on adolescence and self-concept development*

An integration of the multidisciplinary perspectives of several theorists and researchers have suggested that 'adolescence' is the transitional period between childhood and adulthood in which adolescents confront biological, cognitive, social and emotional transitions during puberty. For this reason, Frydenberg (1997) argued for an investigation into adolescence from the developmental and life span perspectives. Developmental perspectives view adolescents from within the family and are closely linked to psychoanalytical and social learning theories. The life-span perspective focuses on developmental transitions that occur in the biological, social and psychosocial domains, and the interrelations that exist between adolescents and their ecosystems. (Baltes, 1987, 2000, 2003, as cited in Santrock, 2006) proposed that life-span perspective is lifelong, multidimensional, multidirectional, plastic, multidisciplinary and contextual, which

involves growth, maintenance and regulation. Additionally, it grasps the belief that age does not dominate maturation throughout adolescents' lifetime. Instead, adolescents develop across the formerly identified multidimensional domains. Progressions of these dimensions are multidirectional and may decrease or increase in relation to adolescents' social contexts. Researchers' multidisciplinary perspectives argue for an investigation into life-span development towards a holistic understanding of adolescents' self-concepts.

During adolescents' challenging developmental years, confrontations with demands, expectations and temptations occur. More importantly, personal and social factors influence self-concept development occurring at this stage. Self-concept formation, central during adolescence, tends to have profound effects on adolescents' education (Harter, 1999). In their efforts to gain identity and independence, some adolescents become highly stressed, uncooperative and rebellious. Factors that may account for such actions include hormonal influences on mood and behaviour; physical health and health care; family, peer, neighbourhood and community concerns; economic strain; mass media among others (Steinberg, 1999). In 2006, Santrock affirmed that family instability and unstable environments contribute to instability in adolescents. Some of these concerns, which can affect self-concept development, are evident among youths worldwide, regionally, hence in the present study.

In 1983, Hill identified three frameworks aimed at understanding adolescent development in relation to self-concept formation. The first of which is 'fundamental changes of adolescence' that explore 'Biological, Cognitive and Social transitions.' Secondly, 'contexts of adolescence', which consider adolescents' interactions with their families, peer groups and others within the school environment, community and society and during work and leisure. Finally, an exploration of 'psychosocial developments', related to adolescents' psychosocial concerns. These adopted

frameworks explore theoretical perspectives to ascertain the associations among adolescents' developmental tasks, transitions and self-concept development.

### *3.6.1 Adolescent transitions and self-concept development*

#### *3.6.1.1 Biological transitions*

In his studies on adolescence, Steinberg (1999) refers to 'puberty' as the period during which adolescents experience biological transformations that result in physical, emotional, social and behavioural changes. Other researchers suggested that hormones perform 'organizational' and 'activational' roles. They proposed that interrelations between organizational and activational changes result in additional transformations as well (Coe, Hayashi, & Levine, 1988 as cited in Steinberg, 1999). The brain and nervous systems are organized during prenatal development until childhood; accounting for gender differences, cognitive capacities, emotional states and behavioural changes predominantly activated by hormonal changes during adolescence. Increases in hormonal changes stimulate secondary sex characteristics. At different stages, both males and females notice pubic hair growth and changes in the appearance of physique and sex organs. While males observe voice change, females undergo breast development and menarche, which may stimulate sex drive that can result in sexual behaviours (Steinberg 1999). In 1997, Frydenberg noted that physiological changes affect self-image and psychological variables such as self-esteem, worth and efficacies. Biological changes therefore influence behaviours, attitudes and social relations, thereby affecting adolescents' perceptions and evaluations of their personal and social selves.

Adolescents experience normative changes during the early and late phases of adolescent self-concept in their quest for identity and independence. In early adolescence, self-evaluations and descriptions relate to normative standards, social comparisons and behaviours; while in late adolescence; self-attribution develops into personal beliefs and standards (Damon & Hart, 1988).

Once body image develops according to the norm, adolescents' self-images and worth heighten. In contrast, those who do not meet the norm feel inferior and their self-images and worth lowered. While these developmental changes occur, adolescents express a greater need for privacy and independence. As they detach from their families, their social interactions extend to peer relations and other societal members, which can affect self-conceptions positively or negatively. Depending on maturational changes, some adolescents may feel self-assured, involved and motivated, while others feel inferior and self-conscious. This occurs because there are variations in maturational growth between both male and female genders and within the same gender group. Therefore, pubertal development varies from one adolescent to another.

In 2002, the American Psychological Association affirmed the aforementioned views and added that genetic factors, nutrition, health care, social class, and other forms of nurturing as well as environmental stress significantly influence adolescents during puberty. These factors can affect adolescents' enthusiasm, motivation and learning. In sum, the literature suggest that adolescents' physiological changes can affect psychological factors such as self-esteems, control, worth and efficacies.

#### *3.6.1.2 Cognitive transitions*

Cognitive development in adolescence was defined as 'formal operational' thought by Piaget (1896, 1980), as cited in (Murray 2000). This means that adolescents engage in abstract reasoning once they successfully gain maturational and psychological development from the previous developmental stages. Abstract thinking broadens thinking capacities beyond conscious thought to insightful perspectives. This enables adolescents to recognise solutions to problems make decisions and identify future possibilities. Past studies done by Lawson & Renner (1974) and Shayer & Wylam, (1978), found that many students at the age of 15 still work at the concrete operational level identified by Piaget. As such, several of them have trouble in formal reasoning,

decision making, problem solving and insightful thought. In fact, this situation persists throughout secondary school years. Adey & Shayer, (1994) designed successful programs that provided preparatory experiences through Piaget's stages for secondary system students with the aim of accelerating their formal reasoning.

Those who attain increased cognition can critically and rationally analyse, solve problems, and deal with a number of complex issues they encounter in circumstances and events. Although they may not be able to resolve every challenge they confront, they seldom rely on the advice of their significant others as they try to gain independence of thought and action; preferring to learn from their experiences themselves. The internal and external conflicts encountered can cause them to either surrender or persevere. Those who are able to achieve developmental tasks make the necessary transitions and gain a wider and mature perspective on life and its many obstacles. They become resilient as they discover ways to solve and cope with concerns. In an exploration of adolescents' coping, Frydenberg (1997) identified coping as a multifaceted construct and suggested that adolescents' behaviours, motivations, attitudes and feelings determine how some adolescents cope with, adapt to, and solve concerns. Simultaneously, adolescents' coping leads to interpretations of their behaviours, motivations, feelings and attitudes that shape self-efficacies, controls and wills.

Kohlberg (1927-1987) formulated his moral reasoning theory based on Piaget's discoveries to suggest that heightened cognition results in heightened moral reasoning, which enables adolescents to make rational choices and decisions. Strongly linked to Piagetian developments of assimilation, accommodation and equilibrium, moral reasoning is an ongoing process of acquiring cognition. The mature adolescent operates on conventional reasoning mode and can adhere to legal societal norms and standards. Those described as unconventional or disconnected from the norm promote disruptive, troubling behaviours such as rebelliousness and delinquency. As evident

in the background of this study, many adolescents today, display troubling reactions, which suggest that several of them have concerns with moral reasoning.

Proponents of Information Processing, Keating (1990); Ward & Overton (1990); Moshman (1990, 1998) and Kegan (1982, 1994), challenged Piaget's perspective and identified alternatives. They also recognised definite changes involved in cognitive thought that may account for advanced thinking, proposing, that advanced thinking involves memorising and organising information in acquiring a knowledge base and cognitive self-regulation. Kegan (1982, 1994), in his meaning-making principle adopted the views of cognitivists and psychoanalysts and revealed that adolescents use their cognitive schemas to understand, construct and organize their personal and social worlds to influence their perceptions, reactions, and interpersonal relations that shape their self-concepts (as cited in Kroger 1996).

Murray (2000) suggested that the realization of cognitive potentials could occur through exposure to direct experiences that promote optimum development of thinking skills. Since adolescents' educational environments are integral in their cognitive developments, it is necessary to provide avenues to improve their cognitive abilities. Vygotsky (1978) advocated for the fostering of cognition through active participation using concrete objects to develop abstract concepts, social rules, healthy social interactions and communications. This approach indicates that it is never too late to learn. James (1910) and Epstein (1973, 1983) confirmed this view in their psychological perspectives and reinforced the significance of learning environments and experiences in the promotion of cognitive development.

The cognitive perspective focuses on how adolescents psychologically and emotionally assimilate, accommodate, represent and accumulate information. Cognitive psychologists then relate perception and information processing to patterns of behaviour. They investigate aptitude, decision making, problem solving, critical and analytical reasoning and interpersonal relations.

Clearly, the above theoretical views propose that cognitive ability is fundamental in the shaping of the multidimensional conceptions of self.

### *3.6.1.3 Social transitions*

Adolescents are required to fulfil social roles with peers, those of the opposite gender and societal members, complete schooling and choose careers in preparation for adulthood. Santrock (2006) explained, “A rite of passage is a ceremony or ritual that marks an individual’s transition from one status to another.” (p. 415). In the absence of rituals, in the western world, social transitions adolescents participate in some subculture, such as graduation ceremonies to affirm their transitions. Regardless, the social passage from childhood to adolescence varies over time and from adolescent to adolescent according to socioeconomic, cultural and environmental conditions. Due to challenging socioeconomic and unstable family conditions in contemporary societies, expectations of adolescents to adopt social roles beyond their maturational stages cause them to engage in adult activities and opportunities. This may prompt adult-like self-evaluations, introspections, behaviours and interactions, as increases in responsibilities, independence and freedom intensify. Scott & Woolard (2004) suggested that adolescents who perform adult roles face a wider range of decisions that may have serious long-term consequences. These transitions are likely to prompt new concerns and changes in adolescents’ skills, aspirations and expectations and influence psychosocial development.

Background data on several adolescents in this study suggest that they live under impoverished socioeconomic conditions and in unstable families. As such, a number of them work during weekday evenings and on weekends. Quite a few take on parental roles by becoming child caregivers of their younger siblings. Whereas, others are latchkey kids unsupervised and solely responsible for themselves while their parents are away at work during the week due to their geographical status from their workplace (Santrock 2006). Their additional responsibilities and

interactions may result in a greater sense of freedom and autonomy and the broadening of interpersonal relationships. However, many seem to lack the capacity to behave and react reasonably and responsibly; engage in moral reasoning and decision making; critical self-evaluations and judgements; thereby being involved in troubling situations and worrying reactions. As such, others easily influence several of them. Additionally, their troubling behaviours and emotional concerns suggest that they are not coping with the many challenging situations and pressures confronting them.

Furthermore, while these adolescents may develop economic maturity and the ability to support themselves and their families, their psychological, socio-emotional and psychosocial maturity may lag behind. Frequent exploitation by employers due to insufficient job requirement skills, further lessens the working adolescents' self-esteems and efficacies. Additionally, the jobs they perform bear little resemblance to their future aspirations, thereby contributing to states of inferiorities and inadequacies. The social roles adopted by many of these adolescents therefore act as inhibitors to their developmental and lifespan perspectives; consequently affecting their self-conceptions.

### *3.6.2 Contexts of adolescents*

Evidently, adolescents are nurtured and educated in the family, school, community and societal contexts. Bronfenbrenner's development of the ecological theory in 1979, proposed that the human/physical ecosystems and social environmental systems in which individuals live can positively or negatively influence their self-developments. Berger (2000) identified the human/physical ecosystem as the climate and space per person; and the social environment as the people, culture and economy. Regarding adolescents, the contexts in which they interact within their ecosystems do present challenges and concerns associated with self-concept development. Families, peers, schools, education officials, community members, society including community

laws, culture, and health and welfare services are highly influential in self-concept formation. (Elkind, 1984a as cited in Frydenberg 1997) proposed that many adolescents live under stressful circumstances such as abuse, neglect; changes in family structure, impoverished conditions, and low educational climates, which account for their troubling reactions and behaviours.

Social interaction, seen as integral in cognitive development and in the formation of social roles and functions precedes development (Vygotsky, 1978). He advocates that social learning occur at first during social interactions, then internally on the personal level. In addition, adolescents consider their peers, teachers and significant others to be knowledgeable regarding tasks, concepts of interest and activities to be accomplished. These social constructs influence adolescents' attainments of knowledge, performance, behaviours, attitudes and ethical principles.

Frydenberg (1997) affirmed that formations of adolescents' perceptions result out of their experiences. Adopting a behaviourist perspective, psychological and behavioural progressions are the outcomes of adolescents' educational history. Social learning theorist Bandura (1986, 1989) posited that environmental conditions and events; genetic influences and learning experiences, can have restrictive influences on an individual's capabilities, interests and behaviours. Considering that adolescents model the behaviours and attitudes of their significant others, it is crucial for them to model positive behaviours and reactions to nurture their self-control. This approach sees rewards and punishment acting on the nature and biological aspects of adolescents. Behaviours and reactions that are improper are punished or reinforced, thereby negatively or positively influencing adolescents' self-concepts. Considering adolescents' troubling behaviours, behaviourists therefore investigate adolescents learning history to discover ways to promote positive healthy behaviours. Bernstein & Nash, (1999) indicated that adolescents learn troubling behaviours and can learn to transform or prevent them by reconditioning old habits and developing new ones.

It is necessary then for stakeholders to nurture adolescents' unique competencies and qualities through the provisions of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (as cited in Murray, 2000). This humanistic approach, proposes that adolescents have the capacities to make wise, healthy choices when thinking and acting towards determining positive, healthy behaviours and achieving their highest potentials. Humanists established the 'nature versus nurture' perspective and suggested that adolescents' behaviours and reactions may result according to nature's biological and genetic factors such as abilities, traits and capabilities inherited from their biological parents (as cited in Murray, 2000). In contrast, adolescents' nurturing within their physical and social environments is crucial as well. Some of the physical and biological, influences may include the mother's prenatal and postnatal health care. Other social environmental influences include parental discipline and supervision and the effects of peer pressure and schooling (Feldman, 2000).

Lerner & Spanier (1980) argued that positive social change result in positive adolescent development and positive adolescents' reactions, which in turn affect society. It is necessary then, for ecosystems to provide incentives and opportunities to guide, support and counsel adolescents to confront life's challenges in the quest for healthy self-conceptions and educational growth and advancement. Since adolescents' social contexts broaden, expectations of them to adopt social roles increase, which require them to make distinctions and connections between personal and social selves. Those gaining self-awareness will be better able to maintain self-identity and understand others.

### *3.6.3 Psychosocial developments*

Steinberg (1996) identified five psychosocial concerns adolescents confront as they grow and develop as identity, autonomy, intimacy, sexuality and achievement. These concerns involve psychological and sociological changes. Adolescents, who discover and understand self, achieve identity. Those who attain independent rational thoughts and actions; make rational decisions; and

establish personal values and moral codes are autonomous. Others, who can relate to and empathize with peers and societal members, achieve intimacy; while those who can form healthy physical relations with opposite genders within boundaries, form sexuality. Adolescents therefore have the ability to resolve questions about sexual values and morals and to make wise choices concerning sexual practices and behaviours. Finally, those who develop social and educational competencies can aspire to achieve long-term goals concerning careers and other avenues to become successful productive citizens. Adolescents who achieve these concerns gain coherent self-conceptions and are able to acquire new skills and capabilities to confront new crises while they grow and develop.

Conversely, adolescents who do not achieve psychosocial concerns are often confronted with psychosocial problems; posing some difficulty for them in the development of healthy, positive self-conceptions. Psychologists and other experts identified anxiety, indifference, aggressiveness and other troubling behaviours as some of the associated problems. Several students in the background of this study do exhibit these behaviours, which suggest that they are experiencing psychosocial problems. Achenbach, McConaughy & Howell (1987) have categorized these problems as 'internalizing' and 'externalizing' disorders. Internalizing disorders, such as anxiety, depression and other emotional concerns are outcomes of adolescents internally repressed feelings and thoughts. Externalizing disorders are those behaviours and troubling concerns exhibited outwardly, such as alcohol and tobacco habits, obscene behaviours and various forms of aggression (Crijnen, Achenbach & Verhulst, 1997; Lambert, Lyubansky, & Achenbach, 1998). These different inconsistencies between self-representations relate to the different kinds of emotional vulnerabilities, which result from unhealthy negative interactions and events in adolescents' ecosystems. The adolescents in this study have identified that they live under abusive circumstances, neglect and other forms of discomfort. These conditions have resulted in different

negative psychological and socio-emotional concerns such as aggressive and obscene behaviours among other unusual reactions and outbursts as highlighted in the background of the study. Their troubling psychosocial problems can also negatively influence their behaviours and reactions that determine their self-control.

### *3.7 Summary*

The theoretical perspectives discussed, reveal that adolescents' nature/biological inheritance; and nurture/personal and social experiences highly correlate and are influential in adolescents' developments and education. Bandura (2006) emphasized that these transitional phases in adolescents' lives present them with numerous physical and socio-emotional challenges and opportunities. Social systems perform prominent roles in shaping adolescents' efficacies, which contribute to their cognitive, socio-emotional and psychosocial developments. Biological, cognitive and social transitions therefore prove to be highly influential on adolescents' personal, social and educational competencies, consequently, shaping adolescents' self-concepts.

### *3.8 Self-concept and personal self*

The plethora of literature reviewed thus far suggests that positive self-concepts equate to positive values adolescents attach to self in terms of self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence, and self-will. (Hattie, 1992, as cited in Murray, 2000) defined conceptions of self as various dimensions attributed to self in terms of descriptions, expectations and prescriptions. The integration and formation of these dimensions occur through self-verification, consistency and enhancement (Murray 2000). In 1999, Harter suggested that self-conceptions involve success in completing various developmental tasks; educational activities; the capacity to engage in critical, rational thinking and problem solving; and the ability to explore and perform various roles and engage in healthy social relations with others. Students who perform successfully are typically characterised by positive values, which they attach to self, than those who do not. Low performers

usually experience hardship in achieving goals and completing tasks and as characterized by feelings of uncertainty, inadequacy, and inferiority (Burns, 1982; Marsh, & Hau, 2004, 2005; Purkey, 1988). Self-concept is a determinant of behaviour and learning. Hence, low self-concepts tend to produce poor performance levels and in some cases withdrawal from activities (La Benne & Green, 1969; Purkey, 1970, as cited in Burns, 1979).

In 1994, Franken added that self-concept gives rise to possible selves, which generate motivation for behaviour. These investigations suggest that students with positive self-concepts can make more positive and clear appraisals of their capabilities to perform and produce results that are superior to those with low self-concepts. Culminations in healthy, positive characteristics, values, behaviours, attitudes and skills encompass the self-concept formed (Alpay, 2000). The relative outcome between self-concept and its multi-dimensions have important educational implications.

The following sections, based upon numerous studies conducted by self-concept experts and researchers discuss the multi-dimensions of self-concept. They indicate a direct relationship between adolescents' self-concepts and their manifest behaviours, perceptions and performance. Adolescents' constructions of personal and social selves are evident, as well as the importance of educational implications to addressing adolescents' personal and social concerns in this crucial phase of their human development.

### *3.8.1 Self-concept and biological transitions*

#### *3.8.1.1 Self-concept, self-image, and self-worth*

Several theoretical views established that females enter puberty about eighteen months to two years earlier than males, which can account for variations in their biological transitions between and within gender groups (Steinberg, 2002; Susman & Rogel, 2004; Santrock, 2006). Although females and males may be at the same chronological age, their physical and socio-

emotional differences can account for their differences in self-perceptions and concerns with self-images. Pubertal changes can thus result in lower ratings of self-images and self-esteem (Williams & Currie, 2000).

Both early and late maturities have advantages and disadvantages that affect self-conceptions positively or negatively. Some females, as well as males, enter puberty earlier or later in comparison to their counterparts. Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Ge, Conger & Elder, 2001, recognized that quite a few early maturing females face adjustment concerns and other socio-emotional challenges when making school transitions. Conversely, others may exhibit negative moods and behaviours (Siegel, Yancey, Aneshensel, & Schuler, 1999), and engage in sexual activities, drinking and smoking (Magnusson, Stattin, & Allen, 1985).

In 2002, Sweeting & West found that adolescent females are dissatisfied with their physical appearances more than males. While some males experience increased skeletal and muscle mass, some females gain weight, resulting in lowered self-esteem (Mendelson, & Andrews 2000). Obesity and obsession with weight result in self-consciousness and usually lead to excessive dieting and other eating disorders. In some cases, the rejections and embarrassments experienced with peers and others generate feeling of unattractiveness, and contribute towards negative self-images, leading a few early maturing females to develop depressive symptoms and other internalizing behaviours (Ge, Conger & Elder, 2001). Others may exhibit aggression and hostile outbursts or other externalizing behaviours and attitudes (Adams, Gullotta & Markstrom-Adams, 1994).

In contrast, Ge, Kim, Brody, Conger, Simons, Gibbons, et al, (2003) indicated that early physical maturity for some males enhance their physiques, which increase their chances to participate in sports and other physical and social activities. Popularity gains them social status with peers and the attention of females, thereby enhancing their self-images and worth and

resulting in heightened self-esteem. Alternatively, in 2001, Ge, Conger & Elder discovered that some early maturing males might have internalizing depressive symptoms or externalizing hostile behavioural concerns. Brooks-Gunn (1988) explained that secretion and stimulation of the male hormone androgen could account for hostile behaviours.

Conversely, late maturing males often have negative self-perceptions, images, worth and self-esteem due to social rejection and unpopularity. Feelings of inferiority in some males may become evident in displays of hostile behaviours (Ge, Conger, & Elder, 2001b), while others may become attention seekers and prone to negative peer pressure. Still, efforts to gain peer approval and belongingness may be a causative factor to delinquent group affiliations within the ecosystems of some (Ge, Brody, Conger, Simons, & Murry, 2002).

In other instances, early maturing males and females experience different forms of stress due to higher expectations, greater responsibility and demands of adults to perform and complete tasks (Ge, et al, 2003; Dorn, Susman & Ponirakis, 2003). In 2004, Herman-Giddens, Kaplowitz, & Wasserman affirmed, those adolescents' exposures to adult situations that require adult maturity could engage them in unfortunate circumstances, which they are unprepared to confront due to their lacks of cognitive functioning, emotional stability and other maturational competencies (Elkind, 2001). In addition, some feel cheated of their youthfulness since they do not have the freedom and time to enjoy their childhood years. Feelings of insecurity and inferiority, stress, anxiety and other internalizing reactions may result that affect their self-worth. In turn, their inabilities to cope often result in negative, unhealthy comments by adults, which lower their self-esteem, worth and efficacies (Frydenberg 1997).

In 2005, Shapka & Keating discovered that self-images and perceptions closely relate to self-worth, which were consistent over time. Positive self-worth gained; influence the types of activities adolescents choose to engage in. In so doing, they become self-motivated and

determined to complete tasks and confront challenges. They noted that self-worth fluctuates according to the self-perceptions or images adolescents have of themselves and others' opinions as well, as evident in Cooley's (1902) 'looking glass' self.

The literature indicates that physiological concerns result in psychological concerns associated with low self-esteems, worth and efficacies (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2001). Biological transitions seem to affect adolescents' personal and social selves (Susman & Rogel, 2004; Steinberg, 2002). Unhealthy self-perceptions relative to James' (1910) material selves intimately known by the 'I' are influenced by negative normative standards and do result in negative self-images and self-worth. Consequently, negative self-perceptions affect adolescents' mental and emotional dimensions and social roles as well. As indicated by (Laura, 2004 as cited in Pang Wong, 2008) consistent negative self-descriptions, evaluations and perceptions frequently lead to negative self-conceptions often influenced by others' opinions and expectations.

### *3.8.2 Self-concept and cognitive, behavioural and affective transitions*

#### *3.8.2.1 Self-concept and cognitive development*

Cognitive transitions influence adolescents' achievements, emotions, attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and aspirations. In 1980, Epstein adopted the cognitive perspective and affirmed that persons use their cognition to organize personal theories of reality. As a result, they incorporate information towards personal self-understanding and awareness, as well as that of others, in their social worlds. Coleman & Hendry (1999) found that changes in adolescents' intellectual functions could result in various behaviours and attitudes; broaden future perspectives and visions; facilitate relational maturities; contribute to communication skills development and improve their abilities to adopt adult roles in society. This results in adolescents' flexibilities and capacities to regulate learning as they assimilate and accommodate their thinking in complex ways (Bellhouse, 2004).

While, Piaget saw the attainments of formal operational thought as the ideal for adolescents, several adolescents do not attain such cognition (Keating, 1990; Muuss, 1996). Keating, 1990 & Muuss, 1996, further argued that less than 30% of sixteen year olds attain early formal operational thought, while ten (10%) reach advanced formal thinking. Their findings confirm that more than 30% of adolescents lack cognitive development, which can retard their self-esteems, worth, efficacies, wills and control. Major contributing factors regarding adolescents' inability to evaluate their thoughts; make decisions and engage in self-assessments; are high unattainable adult and societal expectations, normative standards and cognitive limitations of adolescents (Kegan 1994). Therefore, many adolescents who feel pressured may succumb to failure, while others may be persistent and successful. Consequently, some experience heightened or lowered self-esteems, efficacies and wills.

In an analysis of adolescents' brain functioning, Brown, Tapert, Granholm, & Delis, 2000; Caskey & Ruben, 2003; Spano, 2003, indicated that adolescents' cognitive progressions are delayed in comparison to physical and social developments. This results because the area of the brain mainly responsible for making judgments, engaging in critical rational thinking and problem solving is undeveloped until early adulthood. For this reason, Reyna, (2004) affirmed that these adolescents are unable to process alternatives and consider consequences. Thus, it is imperative to; expose adolescents to challenging opportunities that increase their cognitive capacities towards heightened self-esteems, worth, and efficacies.

Many current researchers Keating, 2004; Klaczynski, 2004; Moshman, 1998, 2005; have dismissed Piagetian's concept that abstract thought also occurs during adolescence. They argued for alternative, cognitive progressions of formal operations in which nurturers identify cognitive competencies at the earliest to conquer limitations. Cognitive attainments can result from implementations of effective, educational interventions and environments (Gopnik, Meltzoff, &

Kuhl, 1999; Gopnik, & Shultz, 2004). In 2005, Gopnik, argued for preservation of natural intellect, catering to adolescents' knowledge base and learning styles towards successful cognitive transitions. Converging views of Epstein 1973, 1983, 1992, 1994; Kaplan 1980; Keating, 2004; Marsh & Hau 2004, 2005 and Rehman 2001, affirmed that consistent cognitive development would allow adolescents to understand the processes by which they gain knowledge.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2002) supports the view that supportive educational environments effectively motivate adolescents to learn, and present them with challenges to promote healthy self-esteem, worth, will and efficacies. They have also agreed that cognitive neuroscience is fundamental to the understanding of learning and practice of teaching. Adolescents with healthy cognitions are able to integrate their perceptions, descriptions, evaluations and experiences into a more comprehensive self-concept (Rehman, 2001). His argument affirms that cognitive development relates to self-concept and fosters self-awareness as well.

#### *3.8.2.2 Self-concept and self-esteem*

In 1979, Rosenberg proposed that an association exists between self-esteem and psychological well-being. He established that self-esteem is the evaluative part of self-concept interpreted through persons' levels of aspirations, motivations, confidence, skills and achievements when exposed to new experiences and challenges. In 1983, Gecas & Schwalbe identified two dimensions to conceptualize self-esteem. The first dimension "efficacy based self-esteem [involves] seeing oneself as competent and capable and worth based self-esteem [involves] feeling that one is accepted and valued" (as cited in, Stets & Burke 2002 p. 6). Both dimensions act as motivational tools.

In 2006, Trzesniewski, Moffitt, Poulton, Donnellan, Robins, & Caspi, discovered that low self-esteem during adolescence resulted in unhealthy mental and physical wellbeing; involvements

in immoral behaviours; and lower economic progress during adulthood, in comparison to adolescents with high self-esteem. There is also a high association between low self-esteem and externalizing problems such as hostility, delinquency and disruptive behaviours (Hay, 2000; Marsh, Parada, Yeung & Healey, 2001; Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Richard, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005).

Notably, literature continues to make substantial arguments for the nurturing of high self-esteem. Nurturing can only occur in positive ecosystems; during positive interactions established from infancy; and throughout the following years to adolescence (Ostgard-Ybrandt & Armelius, 2004). In 2004, Eccles found self-esteem vulnerable during pubertal, cognitive and social transitions. When adolescents believe they are competent achievers in given tasks, their self-esteem tends to be high. Similarly, when adolescents feel incompetent to perform activities they may be capable of doing, their self-esteem is at its lowest. As noted by DuBois and Hirsch (2000) high self-esteem correlates with positive outcomes such as higher academic achievement, self-fulfilment and other forms of healthy well-being. Lower self-esteem is associated with undesirable outcomes for instance increased depression, greater peer rejection, and delinquency. These findings indicate that healthy self-esteem can result in desirable outcomes (Harter, 1996; DuBois & Tevendale, 1999). Generally, social support and healthy self-esteem predict less involvement in problem behaviour; while peer self-esteem predicts greater involvement in problem behaviour (Moran & DuBois 2002).

In 1999, DuBois & Tevendale noted that self-esteem researchers have found conflicting views concerning academic achievement. However, most support the view that examinations of self-esteem should involve a multidimensional perspective towards insightful awareness of adolescents' self-esteem. In adopting this approach, they found that exposure to the innumerable dimensions, broadened awareness and aided in the discovery of possibilities. They argued for the

reciprocal relations between the multidimensional aspects of self-esteem and other developmental dimensions such as psychological adjustment, socio-emotional self and relational patterns (Hirsch & DuBois, 2000). Cognisance that self-esteem is significant and integral to the fostering of human development and influential in school performance, they advocated for the implementation of valuable interventions aimed at promoting self-esteem development. Investigations into adolescents' characteristics and perceptions; and considerations of environmental experiences and interactions that include other processes in the formation and preservation of healthy self-esteem are imperative.

Adolescents engage in self-evaluations of their strengths and weaknesses in various life domains (Harter, 1996; Marsh & Hattie, 1996). In 2000, DuBois, Tevendale, Burk-Braxton, Swenson, & Hardesty, claimed that adolescents' self-evaluations and standards relate to various aspects of development during social relations. In 2000, Frenzel recognized that stressors in parental and peer relations affect self-esteem development. Negative outcomes can result in quite a few adolescents with deviant identities (Kaplan & Lin, 2000). As they interact with others in their communities, deviant behaviours can escalate through the formation of alliances (Hirsch & DuBios, 2000).

In 1996, Lawrence revealed that adolescents' low self-esteem indicate discrepancies between their self-images, and other self-conceptions. Discrepancies relative to the psychoanalytical views of Rogers, 1951; Sullivan, 1953; may be displayed through several internalizing negative reactions such as avoidance, anxiety, low motivation, resistance and alienation. Adolescents who manifest these reactions avoid challenges and resort to failure without attempting to perform tasks even if they are beneficial to them. Additionally, some employ defence mechanisms to compensate for their inferiorities and deficiencies by being openly

aggressive, ego-defensive and self-assured. Referring to Alder's (1963) concept, quite a few adopt different identities to mask their self-perceptions and their self-esteem.

On the other hand, DuBois & Tevendale, 1999; Kaplan & Lin, 2000; Manning, Bear, & Minke, 2006; Manning, 2007 support the view that self-esteem can be associated with undesirable outcomes as well. Some of the concerns identified were increased delinquency, deviant, aggressive behaviours and maladaptive adjustments and concerns.

In 2007, Manning explored the contradictory consequences of high self-esteem, according to the views of Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs (2003), to discuss some of the myths and misunderstandings of self-concept and self-esteem in her efforts to promote supportive learning environments that foster students' strengths. She reinforced Baumeister's claim that self-concept seems to be an outcome of high achievement rather than a cause. Consequently, academic skills enhancement is the key determinant to achieving self-concept enhancement. Contrary to the belief that students with low self-concepts display aggression, considerable research reveals that quite a few who exhibit aggressive behaviours, have moderate to inflated self-concepts. Additionally, Baumeister et al. (2003) caution that self-concept is "not a major predictor or cause of almost anything" (p. 37). Instead, focus on human progression should involve healthy educational and social competency developments and positive self-perceptions to promote self-concept development and in therefore, self-esteem (Manning, 2007).

Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Dusek & Flaherty, 1981; Thompson, 1988; Nottelman, 1987; O'Malley & Bachman, 1983; found insignificant increases in adolescents' self-esteem during their transitions from one school to another. For this reason, they advocated for efforts to deal with the inhibiting factors that delay self-esteem progressions. In this critical pubertal stage, nurturing of adolescents' cognitive structures are necessary to increase, self-esteem, which will increase problem solving, rational thinking and decision-making towards coping with conflicting concerns.

In 1999, Giedd, Blumenthal, Jeffries, Castellanos, Liu, Zijdenbos, Paus, Evans, & Rapoport, proposed that brain cells and connections survive and flourish when utilized, and those that are unused remain dormant and die. If this principle holds true, then environmental conditions must provide avenues and activities for adolescents to develop personal, social and educational competencies to achieve significant impacts on brain development for the enhancement of self-esteem. Once adolescents' self-esteems increase, intrinsic motivation for learning increases as well. In addition, self-efficacy beliefs, motivations and aspirations decrease if adolescents have lower self-perceptions, esteem and worth (Gottfried, Flemming & Gottfried 2001; Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles & Wigfield 2002).

### *3.8.2.3 Self-concept and self-efficacy*

In 1997, Bandura postulated that self-efficacy is the perceived capabilities for learning or performing actions at designated levels. Students with healthy self-efficacy beliefs are self-confident, motivated and determined to perform and complete academic tasks. They are self-efficient and eager in spite of challenges, and are critical, analytical problem solvers (Buskit, Carlson, Enzel & Heth 1997). Additionally, they engage in healthy self-evaluations to monitor their progress (Schunk & Pajares, 2005; Schunk & Meece, 2006).

In 2001, Bandura further stated, "The capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of one's life is the essence of humanness" (p. 1). For this reason, teachers and other persons involved in adolescents' education should make efforts to increase their academic, social and educational competencies. This ought to involve supervision, guidance and counselling, in an effort to nurture healthy self-beliefs. In discovering adolescents' potentials, educators can capitalize on their strengths to motivate and stimulate their interests. Progression of healthy self-efficacy appraisals arise from students' performances, vicarious experiences, forms of persuasion, and physiological reactions.

Self-efficacy can contribute to healthy human functioning if environmental associations between adolescents and families, peers and schools are positive, supportive and cohesive (Schunk & Meece, 2006). Promotions of self-efficacy beliefs involve parents, teachers and other stakeholders exposing adolescents to challenging activities that stimulate their potentials, thereby interests and motivations to achieve favourable outcomes. It is also educators' responsibility to inspire adolescents, in spite of negative outcomes through positive self-talk to overcome barriers in the development of healthy self-efficacies.

Positive influences can also result in school and with supportive peers and effective, committed teachers. The structuring of instruction should involve a healthy educational environment that caters to adolescents' multiple intelligences to maintain and motivate their interests. Education must involve parents, so schools can find ways to motivate parents' interests to get them involved in the lives of their adolescents. Moreover, since peers play a key role in adolescents' education, teachers can form peer networks with those who have similarities to motivate each other (Ryan, 2000, 2001).

Adolescents' self-perceptions and those of others influence their reactions and motivations, which when observed interpret their self-concepts (Fox, 1990, as cited in, Ascii, Kosar, & Isler, 2001). In 2006, Bandura emphasized that these transitional phases in adolescents' lives present them with numerous physical, socio-emotional, challenges and opportunities. Social systems perform prominent roles in shaping adolescents' efficacies, which contribute to their cognitive, socio-emotional and psychosocial developments.

#### *3.8.2.4 Self-concept, self-control and self-will*

In an analysis of the "Cognitive and affective development in adolescence", Steinberg (2005) identified that this critical period involves both risks and opportunities, during which reorganization of regulatory systems occur. He reinforced the fundamental role of puberty in the

improvement of body systems; social information processing; and as noticeable changes in adolescents' abilities to think, feel and do. Steinberg, as well as Keating, 2004; Byrnes, 2001 explained that an interrelation exists between brain regions that account for cognition and behaviour patterns, which can be restructured through the provision of nurturing experiences. In 2005, Nelson, Liebenluft, McClure, & Pine, affirmed their views and added that adolescents' brain developments are crucial to the establishment of behavioural patterns and self-control. In 2003, Baumeister & Vohs, used the terms self-control and self-regulation interchangeably and proposed that self-control involves the accumulation of resources and acquisition of skills to adjust behavioural reactions and internal emotional processes. Self-control then, is the conscious and determined capacity to behave calmly and sensibly, with autonomy regardless of the challenging situations that arise.

In a past study, Lambert, Lyubansky, & Achenbach (1989) examined behavioural and emotional problems of a number of Jamaican adolescents and some of the United States (U.S.) and found that more Jamaican adolescents exhibited internalizing reactions than those of the U.S. Certain behaviours that Jamaican society tolerates, encourages and projects may account for the resultant reactions of Jamaican adolescents. It is necessary therefore for societies in which adolescents live to model positive behaviours and reactions since this can result in unfortunate self-behaviours and reactions.

A recent study done by Rescorla, Achenbach, Ivanhova, Dumenci, Almqvist, Bilenberg, Bird, et al (2007) reported that girls displayed internalizing behaviours such as anxiety and depression than boys. In contrast, boys exhibited more externalizing behaviours than girls, which include attention problems, aggression and rule breaking. Evidently, research is suggesting that resultant behaviours and reactions differ between gender groups. In addition, although their investigations involved 31 countries with various differences, the scores for behavioural and

emotional problems were similar. These findings, as well as those of the former study imply that males and females worldwide exhibit similar behaviours. This indicates that there is a crucial need to investigate the educational challenges of adolescent in the quest to mould minds so that voices of reason flourish.

On another note, research by Ponton, (1997) revealed that adolescents face numerous conflicts during their social interactions, which include risk taking. Research findings proposed that adolescents have common behavioural features that draw them to their peers, which may result in healthy, positive risk taking behaviours or unhealthy, negative ones. Ponton defined risk taking as “a potentially positive testing process” (p.134) for the adolescent. The challenges and risks adolescents meet are the primary tools that they employ in the process of gaining self-awareness and in the shaping of their self-concepts.

Healthy risk- taking behaviours, seen as a means of discovering and developing healthy self-conceptions, result from involvements in activities that heighten self-esteems and efficacies. Some examples mentioned were, participation in sports, the visual and performing arts and other hobbies (Ponton, 1997). For some adolescents, risk-taking behaviours may be challenging. Challenges have positive outcomes such that they engage adolescents in critical rational thinking and ethical decision-making. This also entails using will power to behave well regardless of negative outcomes. The resulting effects are healthy autonomies that further act as motivators to increase self-worth and self-control.

In 2002, Todorović indicated that adolescents with emotional conflicts have lower self-esteems, self-images and self-worth. Those without emotional conflicts form healthy relations. They show greater self-confidence and are able to trust others. Those with internalizing conflicts due to stressful situations have contradictory feelings; are usually dissatisfied with self and often lack confidence and worth. Consequently, they may be highly sensitive and self-conscious in the

presence of others, which contribute to poor self-conceptions. Others may not be able to control their externalizing reactions; because of their inner conflicts and troubling emotional states, they have low self-control.

Contrary to the above views, Kaplan & Lin (2000) observed adolescents not characterized by deviant identities and discovered that negative self-feelings or behaviours affected them directly or indirectly. Moreover, adolescents categorized by deviant identities showed no signs of negative self-feelings on deviant behaviours because they seemed to be able to alienate themselves from negative self-feelings, which suggested that their high self-perceptions might have contributed to their negative reactions. In another study, Ostgard-Ybrandt & Armelius (2003) discovered that negative self-concept is greater in antisocial adolescents who also showed greater autonomy. However, adolescent females who seemed to display antisocial behaviours also showed greater self-hate than all other groups.

In 2000, Spear viewed unhealthy risk taking behaviours as a means of reducing adolescents' personal stresses and conflicting concerns, in their quest for autonomy. She reinforced that positive risk taking behaviours such as new and exciting experiences can broaden adolescents' perspectives, cognition, and lasting genuine relationships. Those with troubling concerns that have the support of their peers who experience similar concerns can learn ways of coping. The resilience gained enables adolescents to confront and conquer challenges together.

Similarly, Overman, Frassrand, Ansel, Trawalter, Bies, & Redmond, (2004) explained that some adolescents mutually exhibit inappropriate, irresponsible, risk-taking behaviours as a group. They added that risk-taking behaviours have some benefits, in that adolescents can begin to explore adult behaviours and privileges, complete normal developmental tasks and develop their cognitive capacities as well. Subsequently, they are able to master challenges associated with risky

behaviours. In so doing, they opted for the heightening of self-esteems through the provisions of rewards and punishments.

Alternatively, some adolescents that engage in daring, risk-taking activities, continue to live a lifestyle with troubling concerns and as a result may have lowered self-beliefs and worth, which can contribute to lack of self-control (Overman et al, 2004).

The modern theoretical perspectives of Allen, Hauser, Bell & O'Conner, 1994; Noom, Dekovic, & Meeus, 2001 and Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986; have argued that autonomy is a developmental milestone of adolescents that links autonomous thinking, feeling and acting rather than a crisis as posited by Erikson (1968). Thus, nurturing adolescents' self-evaluations of cognitive, emotional and behavioural autonomies are essential in facilitating rationality and decision-making in adulthood (Jacobs & Klaczynski, 2002).

In 2005, Beckert claimed that many researchers found it difficult to measure cognitive autonomy because there seemed to be methodological limitations in quantitative research. Many researchers therefore concentrated on emotional and behavioural autonomy rather than cognitive autonomy. Current researchers Casey & de Hann, 2002; Stefanou, Perncevich, DiCintio, & Turner, 2004 have recognized the value of evaluating adolescents' perceptions of their personal independent thoughts; this qualitative approach possesses the ability to increase adolescents' cognitive responsibilities.

Recent research by Giedd, Elvevåg, & Weinberger, (2005) explained that if adolescents attain behavioural and cognitive functions of their prefrontal cortex they will be able to control impulses to inhibit inappropriate behaviours through healthy self-evaluations. Troubling behaviours are thus adjusted and appropriate behaviours initiated, when making transitions and confronted with conflicting concerns. Acquired self-controls promote rational decision-making as well. In addition, adolescents' capacities to process, memorise and organise information heighten

self-esteems and efficacies, which broaden insights to prioritize tasks and goals. Subsequently, their developed self-wills propel them to complete tasks. Self-awareness gained increases feelings of worth, thus enabling them to make healthy self-evaluations in spite of what others may think of them. Self-understanding further allows them to show empathy and understand others during relational interactions.

In sum, biological, cognitive and affective functions affect the development of self-images, worth, esteem, efficacy, will, control, and awareness and shape self-conceptions.

### *3.9 Self-concept and social, relational self*

Research findings of Burrichter & Walden (2006) revealed that social interactions significantly affect adolescents' self-concepts. Classroom climate; teaching strategies and restrictions within the classroom; and students' perceptions of trust and communication with their mothers positively correlated with strong academic self-concept. Students' perceived relationships with their peers and fathers were less significant. The results suggest that healthy relationships can result in student achievement and intrinsic motivation in school.

With the onset of puberty, adolescents encounter serious challenges as they detach from their families. Rosenberg (1979) affirmed that the scrutiny adolescents experience during their social interactions could lower or heighten their self-worth. Those adolescents, that discover their potentials and gain awareness of their personal selves, usually have healthy self-conceptions. Their peers, parents, teachers and other societal relations expose them to new situations, challenges and principles. While some may appreciate this educational experience and conform according to the normative standards, others may rebel. The rebellion within can result in negative self-perceptions. The condemnatory statements, reactions, behaviours and attitudes of their social counterparts, which can result in negative self-images, worth, esteem, will and control, further amplify this.

Contemporary scholars have noted that social processes impact significantly on self-concept (Harter, 1998). In 1999, Holmbeck & Shapera identified interpersonal contexts; primary developmental changes; developmental outcomes and factors affecting adolescents as the frameworks for understanding adolescent development (as cited in Wolfe, & Mash, 2005). They recognized family, peer, school and other societal members as adolescents' interpersonal contexts of development. These relational experiences influence the primary developmental biological, cognitive and social role changes. Positive developmental outcomes of adolescents result from successful transitions previously mentioned. Other factors such as family structure, gender, neighbourhood/community, ethnicity and socioeconomic status can also result in negative or positive outcomes. Variations between individuals also occur, which can result in psychosocial problems and social consequences as well (Brooks-Gunn & Reiter 1990). Research done by Call, Riedel, Hein, McLoyd, Kiske, & Peterson, 2003; Compas 2004; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2004, recognized that adolescents display various roles depending on their ethnicities, and cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, which affect their actual life trajectories as well.

Similarly, past studies done by (Mischel & Mischel, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1970, 1975; as cited in Hattie 1982) found that positive and negative circumstances during interactions affect adolescents' holistic development and determine how they become. They suggested that adolescents, in their efforts to redeem themselves, seek out places of belongingness other than their families to confront both internal and external conflicts.

Often several of them draw closer to peers and others in their social environments rather than their family members, due to neglect, abusive circumstances and poor parenting at home (Brown, 2004). However, many confront similar conditions with their peers such as negative peer pressure, rejection, stigmatization and discrimination. Consequently, those adolescents may engage in multifaceted lifestyle options and temptations such as drugs, sexual activities and other

negative interpersonal incidences, with negative peer groups (Larson & Wilson, 2004). These multifaceted concerns cause some adolescents to adopt numerous social roles to gain others' approvals. Nevertheless, if they have undeveloped cognitive capacities they may be incapable of making critical, rational judgements in role adoptions. Those with mental confusions may experience role confusion, which further deters self-discovery. Thus, changing inconsistent views of personal self and the creation of socially constructed multiple selves result in formations of unfavourable opinions of the personal self. The inconsistencies between adopted social roles result in false self-behaviours and poorly formed self-conceptions (Rosenberg, 1986; Harter, 1999).

In 2000, Garnefski discovered that adolescents' negative perceptions of their families increased with age and strongly correlated with depressive symptoms and antisocial behaviours. In contrast, although negative perceptions of peers decreased, adolescents still showed signs of depression. Moreover, while negative perceptions of school remained stable, antisocial behaviours strongly correlated with school and remained like that throughout the school years. Adolescents' negative perceptions of their social others have negative repercussions, as evident by their show of internalizing, depressive symptoms and externalizing antisocial behaviours.

### *3.9.1 Self-concept and peer relations*

Peers fulfil adolescents' desires to belong, to be self-sufficient, to be adaptable and to gain personal identity or self-concept. However, many adolescents today have intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges that may interfere with self-conceptions.

In 2001, Ryan suggested that several adolescents draw to peers who share similar concerns and preferences, which can result in negative or positive outcomes (Brown, 2004). Although some adolescents share commonalities, their lack of interpersonal skills can result in them having problems relating with each other. Instead of social belonging, they may experience social exclusion that can escalate in negative behaviours and reactions (MacDonald & Leary, 2005).

Consequently, the absence of peer approvals has considerable impacts on adolescents' psychological adjustments, which are significant in the shaping of adolescents' self-concepts (Harter, 1997, 1999).

Brown (1990) identified that negative labelling by peers based on perceived characteristics, can negatively affect adolescents' multiple dimensions of self-concept. Additionally, some adolescents may experience peer rejection (Inderbitzen, Walters, & Bukowski, 1997) and peer victimization that can result in mental, emotional, internalizing distress such as loneliness, aggression, indifference and exclusion (Vernberg, 1990; Prinstein, Boergers, & Vernberg, 2001).

Positive affinities with aggressive peer relations can increase externalizing problem behaviours because they have the approval and acceptance of their peers (Prinstein & LeGreca, 2002; Brown, 2004; Dishion, 2000; Dishion & Owens, 2002). In 2006, Forney, Crutsinger, & Forney affirmed that peer social acceptance strongly related to positive self-worth and self-perception that resulted in risky behaviours.

In 2001, Newman & Newman proposed that there is the possibility of establishing healthy peer relations. They suggested that adolescents must learn healthy intrapersonal and interpersonal skills to facilitate healthy decision making, conflict resolution and coping in the quest for effective communication and mental, emotional stability.

Another proposition that can maintain healthy peer relations involve the development of strong interrelations between similar family and peer profiles as a form of mediation and intervention in the quest to organize, shape and retain healthy self-conceptions (Roberts, Seidman, Pedersen, Chesir-Teran, Allen, Aber, Duran, & Hsueh 2000).

On another note, positive peer relations rather than peer pressure could increase during adolescence when adolescents choose peers that are a source of support and empathy (Rubin, Coplan, Chen, Buskirk, & Wojslawowicz, 2005). The belongingness, self-worth, social control

and mental stability gained, can also reduce the inclination to develop internalizing behaviours (Newman & Newman, 2001). Positive peer relations can cause adolescents to feel they have worth with others so they are encouraged to perform tasks and succeed in them in spite of the challenges encountered. Conversely, adolescents who lack the cognitive capacities to engage in critical thinking and moral reasoning may not choose their peers wisely, which can result in self-insecurities that lead to negative feelings and reactions.

The literature argues that adolescents generally engage in peer group interactions. Healthy interactions require cognitive, social, and emotional skills. For this reason, parents, teachers, community leaders and other stakeholders can promote adolescent development through the development of educational and social competencies towards effective, healthy interactions (Newman, Lohman, & Newman 2007).

### *3.9.2 Self-concept and parental relations*

Research has shown that many factors affect parental relations. Ge, Conger, Lorenz, Elder Jr., Montague & Simons (1992) found that economic distress affects marital quality and disrupts parent-child relations. The negative feelings that parents and adolescents have result in adolescent psychological distress. Ge et al concluded that “economic hardship places adolescents at risk for psychological dysfunction” (p.351). Based on psychoanalysts’ views, psychological distress can result in negative internalizing reactions and externalizing behaviours that account for low self-control, worth and esteem.

In 2004, Ostgård-Ybrandt & Armelius revealed that adolescents who show signs of internalizing alienated reactions and externalizing antisocial, disruptive behaviours might also have developed those reactions and behaviours through the modelling process during poor parental relations. Positive self-concepts result from positive perceptions of parent's early behaviours that adolescents observe and model. Therefore, it is imperative for caregivers to model positive

behaviours and reactions so that their children form positive self-perceptions of them, regardless of their personal and social distress.

Recent research done in 2006 by Henderson, Dakof, Schwartz & Liddle revealed that adolescents with low self-esteem and worth had negative perceptions of their families, which resulted in a disconnect between adolescents and their families and severe externalizing behaviours. Although strong direct relationships existed between severe externalizing behaviours and both family functioning and self-concept, family functioning moderately acted as the mediator between self-concept and externalizing problems. The literature therefore suggests that positive family functioning will result in positive self-concepts and perceptions of families. An integration of self-concept enhancement, parental education and family support can reduce externalizing behaviours.

Parenting behaviours have direct and indirect impacts on adolescents' behavioural and emotional problems (Bandura 1986). Adolescents who perceive their parents as supportive and involved in their lives exhibit fewer behavioural and emotional problems, while others who displayed high self-control levels had fewer problems. Alternatively, adolescents who perceived their parents as manipulative and restrictive displayed more problems. These findings reveal that supportive parenting with firm control, supervision and guidance, together with manipulative psychological control can prevent behavioural and emotional problems experienced by their adolescents, which lead to comfortable lives (Finkenauer, Rutger & Baumeister 2005).

In 1997, Dekovic & Meeus found that negative self-concepts result from poor parental relations. Research done by Pierre (1994) also supports the view that, "Parental educational expectations were most influential for both male and female students and student perceptions of parent presence played a role in their achievement in many instances. Parental communication also had a significant, but negative impact on academic performance in most instances." (p. 35).

Pierre affirms that adolescents' families and parental relationships are crucial to their overall self-development. Healthy parental relations with adolescents help them to understand their adolescents' concerns. In turn, this bonding process enables parents to win adolescents' trust so that they feel a sense of belongingness and safety. In this process, parents can help their adolescents to address their conflicting concerns, which help them to have positive conceptions of self.

Research also affirms that strong parental involvement results in strong morality for adolescents, thus minimal involvement in risky behaviours (Forney, Crutsinger, & Forney, 2006). In light of this, they advocate for educational programs that involve parents in school life with the aim of making collaborative efforts to keep adolescents focused. In this process, school and parents develop programs and other interventions to promote self-concept enhancement, moral behaviours, guidance and counselling.

In another analysis, researchers found that father absence affect childhood self-evaluations and descriptions, which in turn affect self-attributions and interpersonal relationships in adolescence. Kirshner (1992) explored a psychodynamic model to show the effects of father absence on the adolescent and found it crucial for families to have involved father figures. In an earlier study, Hamilton's (1977) research on father absence revealed that numerous factors negatively influence adolescents' conceptions of self, which may have resulted from father absence. Among them are the child's age, duration of father absence, pre-absent father-child relationship, socioeconomic status, mental and emotional functioning of the mother and the relationship between the adolescent and substitute father figures. Considering that many of the adolescents in the present study have experiences of father absence, some of their concerns with self-conceptions may have resulted because of this.

In addition, Nelson & Valliant (1993) in a study on adolescent boys discovered that father absence had a negative effect upon self-concept. They further argued that while substitute fathers affected boys positively, the impacts of father absence showed little improvement. The literature suggests that father absence in childhood has an effect on childhood self-description that later affects self-evaluations, descriptions and perceptions of self in adolescence. For this reason, adolescents' views of self, affect their interpersonal relationships with others across many social contexts. However, since self-concept is dynamic, organised and learnt, it is possible for adolescents to integrate multiple self-concepts into a unified self.

### *3.9.3 Self-concept and other social relations*

An exploration of identity development done in 1999 by Adamson, involved adolescents' perceptions and descriptions of themselves; their relations with adults; and other factors of significant importance in their lives. Adamson concluded that inconsistent self-conceptions correlate to negative factors.

The mismatch between several adolescents and other adults is often associated with adolescents' perceptions of their parents. Quite often, their misconceptions are the outcomes of socio-emotional, psychoanalytical and psychosocial concerns that occur at home. The inconsistent judgements concerning adults' scrutiny, views, mannerisms and behaviours (Yurgelen-Todd, 1998) can result in negative reactions such as antisocial and irresponsible behaviours (Dogon, Conger, Kim, & Masyn, 2007).

Evidently, the generation gap that exists between adolescents and insensitive and unconcerned adults, regarding adolescents' critical concerns affect adolescents' self-perceptions negatively (Santrock, 2006). Studies done by Wigfield, Eccles, Schiefele, Roeser, & Davis-Kean, 2005; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems & Doan-Holbein, 2005 concluded that adolescents' motivational beliefs are influenced by the expectations, beliefs, involvements and perceptions of involved,

committed, supportive parents, teachers and other societal members, who guide, counsel and supervise them.

Other key self-belief motivators such as rewards, encouragements and the provisions of opportunities that cater to adolescents' potentials and strengths are crucial to shaping self-efficacies that encourage adolescents to accomplish educational tasks. These positive reinforces tend to foster adolescents' academic interests as well. In 2007, Hung investigated the relationship between parental involvement and school related outcomes and discovered that students' perceptions of classroom learning environments; teacher attitude and performance and parental involvement at home and in school; parents' social status and family learning environments positively develop students' self-concepts as well.

In 2001, Rehman claimed that supportive, constructive classroom environments result in higher students' self-concepts. Basic desirable factors of classroom environments include comfortable physical classroom conditions, proper use of curriculum, provisions of adequate resources and equipment that cater to students' needs, trained staff, teacher supervision and school policies that promote students' holistic development and human relations. These educational requirements were available in private and urban schools. In contrast, rural schools had inadequate resources and teachers were not working at the required level.

Rehman also found that societal norms valued masculine attributes rather than feminine ones. Society regarded males as competent, confident, logical and dominant and females as sensitive, incompetent and artistic. Consequently, males' self-concepts were significantly higher than females because society viewed femininity negatively. It follows that females who perceive themselves as being unlikeable, expect people not to like them and then act in ways consistent with this or interpret everything to fit their expectancy (Rehman, 2001 p. 161). Therefore, societal norms and opinions do influence self-conceptions.

Recent research by Shumow, Smith & Smith, (2008) indicated that poor adolescent self-care is associated with poorer academic performance and increases in behavioural problems. Provisions of learning enrichment activities after school are required to enhance academic performance. In addition, the formation of youth groups that involve and facilitate adolescents in self-care after-school can provide supervision and other opportunities for personal/social development especially in the case of latchkey adolescents. This involves the teaching of ethical principles and healthy intrapersonal and interpersonal skills and skills development. These supportive, cohesive groups can also help adolescents to deal with some of their conflicting concerns through guidance and counselling services. Ultimately, these facilities prevent adolescents from engaging in negative activities that promote unhealthy self-conceptions (Miller, 2003).

In 2003, Way & Robinson claimed that school significantly affects adolescents in comparison to their peers and families (as cited in Gibson & Jefferson 2006). In a later study done by Gibson & Jefferson (2006), they discovered that “Perceived parental involvement and growth-fostering relationships, contribute significantly to the variance in self-concept” (p.120). In other words, increases in parental involvement and growth-fostering relationships in adolescents’ schooling increase adolescents’ self-concepts. Moreover, Gibson & Jefferson established that church, religious or athletic group relationships showed greater importance in self-concept formation because they presented adolescents with multiple opportunities. Therefore, parents, school personnel and other key stakeholders involved in adolescents’ education should examine the characteristics of relationships that influence adolescents’ developments in the promotion of healthy self-concepts.

In sum, the above studies suggest that adolescents’ motivations closely relate to their achievements. Parental involvement, teacher effectiveness, commitment, and societal norms are

highly influential in nurturing adolescents' self-concepts. Therefore, strong collaborations that include parents, teachers and other key stakeholders involved in the education of adolescents must occur to develop healthy self-conceptions.

### *3.10 Research findings related to self-concept in T&T*

In 1989, Baker explored the "Perceptions of Senior Comprehensive students who operated in situations of persistent failure." She investigated the relationship between students' sex, ability, self-concept and their causal attribution of success and failure and found that significant relationships existed between students' self-concepts and academic achievements. Although school environments influenced students' self-perceptions, Boys showed higher self-concept levels than girls. Students who adopted ego-defensive attitudes had impaired self-concept levels due to their cognitive abilities, task difficulty and attitudes towards academic achievement.

Overall, students placed in the higher self-concept group attended the urban schools of South Trinidad and some from Tobago, while students that attended the rural schools of North and Central, Trinidad were placed in the lower self-concept group. Among the students of South Trinidad and Tobago, many failed to accomplish academic excellence, even though they seemed to have high self-concept levels. Several students from North and Central schools who seemed to have low self-concept levels scored highest on academic achievement. This disparity cautions researchers who claim that students with higher self-concept levels perform well academically. Baker's findings revealed that students in the rural schools out-performed those in the urban schools. Generally, a consistent relationship also existed between self-concept and academic achievement, as successful students had lower self-concept levels than their unsuccessful counterparts. Conclusively, other factors seem to be negatively affecting successful students' self-concepts.

In 1998, Jules conducted research on “Students’ experiences of Secondary schooling in T&T” and reported that while several adolescents shared similar concerns, responses and reactions, they had unique concerns as well. She revealed that many adolescents come from conflicting home situations that result in emotional needs, behaviours and reactions, which schooling could not suffice. In this regard, many adolescents developed defence mechanisms as postulated by Sullivan (1953) to suppress their deep concerns. She found that the opinions others have of adolescents, were highly influential on how they see and represent themselves. In her postulations, she identified schooling as one of the most influential facilities of learning to aid adolescents in making successful transitions. In this case, the planning and implementation of interventions should address the socio-emotional and psychosocial concerns of adolescents “aimed at identity formation, a strong sense of self and competence to cope with the events of living” (p. 342).

Worrell, Watkins & Hall (2008) examined the “Reliability and validity of global Mathematics and English self-concept scores in a sample of Secondary school students in T&T.” Data collected using the Self-Description Questionnaire II (SDQII) found males recorded higher self-concepts on the Mathematics scale, than females while females reported higher self-concepts on the English scale, than males. They reported that the SDQII proved reliable and valid tools in assessing secondary level adolescents’ Mathematics and English abilities and proposed that assessments occur before entry into secondary school to determine adolescents’ self-concept scores in both subjects. Early interventions make it possible to decrease school dropout rates and underachievement. Pretesting also broaden educators’ perspectives in the planning of activities with parents to create individualized educational programmes to meet adolescents’ needs. Further recommendations included self-concept assessment by using global and domain-specific subscales to identify student profiles that ascertain preventive measures and interventions, which could address the personal and social concerns of our adolescents in T&T.

### *3.11 Summary*

The review of past and current literature from the western world indicates a dynamic theoretical interrelation between adolescent self-concept and its multidimensional constructs with reference to adolescents regionally, locally and in this study's context. Therefore, adolescents' self-conceptions transcend disciplinary and cultural barriers regardless of geographical locations.

Formations of self-concept occur during personal experiences within social, relational contexts. In this process, adolescents form either negative or positive personal perceptions or descriptions. In this regard, multiple self-domains result accordingly. The self-concept formed determines how adolescents think, feel, behave and respond in various life experiences. It is crucial therefore to implement interventions to address adolescents psychological, socio-emotional and psychosocial concerns and challenges fundamental to holistic human development.

To this end, the main themes emerging from the literature pertaining to adolescent self-concept in the western world are relevant to the personal and social concerns and educational challenges those adolescents of the wider social context, Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago and the rural, co-ed Secondary School in Eastern Trinidad. More importantly, the educational implications that arise from the findings substantiate the claim that adolescent self-concept is worth exploration to address the psychosocial and socio-emotional concerns integral to human development.

## CHAPTER FOUR (4)

### Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusions

This chapter discusses the common concerns among adolescents in the wider social context, the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago and the context of those in the present study.

#### *4.1 Synthesis of findings*

The plethora of literature reveals that adolescents in the western world, the Caribbean, T&T and those in the context of this study share similar personal/social concerns related to self-concept. During pubertal transitions, adolescents can have conflicting views of self-image and worth that further affect self-esteem, control, efficacy and confidence. Indoctrinations from poor peer relations, parent-child relationships and significant others in adolescents' relational contexts have negative consequences. Adolescents who adopt defence mechanisms in coping with anxieties and fears may exhibit negative internalizing reactions and externalizing behaviours. Wearing masks to gain others' approval hinder adolescents from becoming who they really are. Confrontations of traumatic events repressed in the unconscious mind reveals adolescents' source of conflicts. Effective guidance and counselling can aid in conflict resolutions towards healthy self-conceptions.

Successful developmental transitions enable adolescents to mature psychologically, psychoanalytically, socially and psychosocially across life-span development. Cognitive maturity helps adolescents to manage emotions because they learn to think rationally, solve problems and confront crises to maintain a balance between pleasure and pain to achieve emotional satisfaction. The resilience gained results in healthier self-control lessening chances of developing internalizing reactions and externalizing behaviours. Consequently, adolescents form healthier self-perceptions and engage in positive self-evaluations that enhance self-worth and self-confidence. In turn, self-

esteem strengthens and results in autonomous beings. In this process, others' negative opinions have no great impact on shaping who adolescent become.

Poor nurturing within ecosystems, uncaring, unstable, family functioning; ineffective teachers; unsupportive peers and other forms of conflicting disquiet during social interactions lower self-conceptions further. If this is the outcome, parental and teacher functioning are responsible in defining their approaches and obligations to adolescents' self-concept development. The following recommendations identify the educational implications to addressing adolescents' personal/social concerns in the quest for healthy self-concept formation.

#### *4.2 Recommendations*

Consistent with adolescents' self-concepts is the dynamic relationships between them and their relations within their ecosystems. Adolescents' complex reactions, beliefs, and behaviours that result, affect their self-perceptions and descriptions. Research findings reveal unsuccessful developmental transitions affect self-conceptions. In the absence of support and opportunities for holistic human development at home, school and in the wider society many adolescents cannot confront their conflicting personal/social concerns that affect their self-conceptions.

Regarding biological transitions, adolescents should be educated about pubertal changes and normative standards. Physiological awareness counteracts psychological effects that can negatively influence self-images, worth, esteems, control and efficacies. Illuminations of the similarities and differences between male and female genders, and within their own gender groups would enable them to appreciate the uniqueness of self and others. This will dispel discriminations, stigmatizations and negative labelling, which can significantly affect adolescents' self-conceptions.

Exposures to problem solving and coping skills and managing emotions through guidance and counselling and drama therapy will enable adolescents to successfully confront psychological

and socio-emotional concerns exhibited by internalizing reactions such as inferiority and anxiety and externalizing behaviours such as aggression and delinquency.

Adult attitudes contribute to adolescents' feelings of inadequacy when they force their expectations and ideals on them including excessive demands of the education system (Porter, 2000). Their inability to meet their requirements can result in low self-esteem. School adjustment and achievement should involve dedicated and accommodating teachers to heighten self-esteem. Reeve & Ainley (2004) suggested that learning activities must arouse adolescents' curiosities to stimulate and maintain students' attentions, engagements and motivations. Teachers should therefore assess students' history, strengths and limitations then, create interventions that cater to learning styles and needs.

In 2007, Manning reinforced the need for diverse curriculums to give students choices and enable them to control their learning as well. The adoption of constructivism, participative democracy and cooperative learning enable adolescents to become active creators and constructors of their own knowledge, which foster belongingness, acceptance, creativity, empathy and social skills.

In 2003, Meece, Herman & McCombs discovered that adolescents report greater self-efficacy and engagement in learning when teachers promote higher order thinking and understanding; reinforce the significance of individual mastery; communicate high expectations for learning; honour students' voices, create supportive social relations, and adapt instruction to students' needs and interests. Cognitive capacities awaken and expand as learners become motivated to think, solve problems, analyse, reason and use moral judgements. In this regard, adolescents can identify positive/negative risk-taking behaviours to overcome risky outcomes

Roger's (1992) Person-centred therapy involves clients' self-exploration and self-understanding to achieve catharsis in the quest to improve self-concept and independence (George

& Cristiani 1995). The teacher as active listener in the role of counsellor can adopt Roger's therapeutic attributes of congruency, unconditional positive regard and accurate empathetic understanding. Creating warm, non-judgemental atmospheres encourage adolescents to share their concerns and result in self-healing possibilities. Positive self-statements boost self-morale and motivate adolescents to accomplish tasks that propel them to take control of their reactions and feelings and identify alternative ways of coping with and overcoming challenges. The self-love, appreciation and awareness gained enable adolescents to be sensitive and empathetic with others thereby learning to appreciate cooperate, listen and affirm others.

Fletcher, Glen & Mekos (2000) contended that "family dynamics of civil socialization deserve more attention than they have received today" (p. 29). Parental involvement promotes belongingness, cohesiveness, security and the development of ethical principles and motivates adolescents to persevere regardless of conflicting concerns. Thus, schools must work in conjunction with families to incorporate participative decision making to achieve common goals in adolescents' best interests. This fosters the value of education and reinforces parental roles in initiating learning activities at home to improve students' performance. The autonomy parents achieve through collaboration and participation will encourage them to create healthier home environments that meet basics needs in the promotion of self-growth.

In 2004, Klaas, Bailey & Bullock suggested guidelines to help adolescents navigate successfully. Parents should create opportunities for skills development and engage adolescents in extracurricular activities, the visual and performing arts among other pursuits. These options stimulate adolescents' interests and prevent them from engaging in negative activities that usually result in poor influences. Supportive parents listen to what adolescents have to say; challenge them to perform reasonable tasks; discuss the dangers of risk-taking; are proactive rather than

reactive; set reasonable consequences through negotiation, giving them rewards, modelling positive behaviours.

The social nature of self-concept suggests involvements in-group activities that monitor healthy peer relations in school and in the community. Working with peers enables adolescents to develop interpersonal skills. Peer-mediation programs encourage adolescents to resolve conflicts on their own without the use of violence or aggression. Social communication skills should include active listening, empathy building, expressing and managing emotions and conflict resolution. Diverse group activities that promote warmth, fairness and consistent moral behaviours and standards shape healthy self-concepts.

#### *4.3 Conclusion*

Adolescent conceptions of self result from cumulative effects during biological, social and psychosocial transitions. Positive transitions result in healthy self-concept formations, which facilitate the attainment of many desirable outcomes. Positive educational environments, family, school and community youth groups can shape personal qualities, which support cognitive, psychological, psychosocial and socio-emotional achievement. Favourable outcomes will motivate desires to succeed and promote high educational aspirations that are integral in self-concept formation. The onus therefore, is on social systems to dispel the factors that generate negative self-conceptions. This study affirmed Rehman's (2001: 1) findings that:

Success and failure in life largely depend on the level of self-concept of the individual concerned.

The more we discover this level and its relationship to the world, the more we know ourselves.

Such knowledge provides us with a measure of internal stability and security.

We can better see the directions and can stay with the realities of life.

Self-concept affects life style and being effected by other variables.

The main themes emerging from the literature pertaining to adolescent self-concept in the western world are relevant to the personal and social concerns and the educational challenges those adolescents of the wider social context, Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago and the rural, co-ed Secondary School in Trinidad. More importantly, the educational implications that arise from the findings substantiate the claim that adolescent self-concept is worth exploration to address the psychosocial and socio-emotional concerns integral to human development.

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## APPENDICES

**Appendix A**  
Analysis of student questionnaire

RESPONSE	QUESTION	# OF STUDENTS' RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES
A I do not need assistance to B I need assistance to C I urgently need assistance to	deal with stress at home deal with stress at home deal with stress at home	9 14 2	36% 56% 8%
A I do not need assistance to <b>B I need assistance to</b> C I urgently need assistance to	learn how to speak to others <b>learn how to speak to others</b> learn how to speak to others	4 <b>19</b> 2	16% <b>76%</b> 8%
A I do not need assistance to <b>B I need assistance to</b> C I urgently need assistance to	perform better in my school work <b>perform better in my school work</b> perform better in my school work	0 <b>21</b> 4	0% <b>84%</b> 16%
A I do not need assistance to <b>B I need assistance to</b> C I urgently need assistance to	feel like I belong somewhere <b>feel like I belong somewhere</b> feel like I belong somewhere	3 <b>20</b> 2	12% <b>80%</b> 8%
A I do not need assistance to <b>B I need assistance to</b> C I urgently need assistance to	be comfortable with others <b>be comfortable with others</b> be comfortable with others	4 <b>19</b> 2	16% <b>76%</b> 8%
A I do not need assistance to <b>B I need assistance to</b> C I urgently need assistance to	learn to love myself <b>learn to love myself</b> learn to love myself	5 <b>19</b> 1	20% <b>76%</b> 4%
A I do not need assistance to <b>B I need assistance to</b> C I urgently need assistance to	believe I am beautiful and I have worth <b>believe I am beautiful and I have worth</b> believe I am beautiful and I have worth	3 <b>20</b> 2	12% <b>80%</b> 8%
A I do not need assistance to B I need assistance to <b>C I urgently need assistance to</b>	discover ways to relate with parents, friends and others discover ways to relate with parents, friends and others <b>discover ways to relate with parents, friends and others</b>	1 5 <b>19</b>	4% 20% <b>76%</b>
A I do not need assistance to B I need assistance to C I urgently need assistance to	manage my anger, sadness and fears manage my anger, sadness and fears manage my anger, sadness and fears	0 16 5	0% 64% 20%
A I do not need assistance to B I need assistance to C I urgently need assistance to	learn to make positive choices and decisions learn to make positive choices and decisions learn to make positive choices and decisions	1 14 10	4% 56% 40%

**Appendix B**

Analysis of free responses in **student questionnaire**: Students' responses coded, priority concerns and priority needs identified.

Items	Coded students' responses.	Priority concerns.	Priority needs.
Things students do not like	Bullying. Name calling. People who don't like me. People who hurt my feelings. My friends betray me.	Emotional/Behavioural. Emotional. Psychosocial. Psychosocial. Psychosocial.	Coping with peer pressure and emotions. Building positive self concept. Dealing with difficult situations and coping with emotions.
Things students like	Support Sporting activities. Listening to Music.	Lack of involvement and active participation.	Building self confidence to participate in sporting activities and music events.
Students' feelings about self	Behaviours can be improved. Ashamed/embarrassed. Can't do my best. Frustrated. Easily tempered.	Behavioural. Emotional. Psychosocial. Emotional. Emotional/Behavioural.	Making correct decisions. Building self concept, positive thinking and emotional coping skills. Managing anger and emotions.
Things that make students feel happy	No family quarrel and fights. When people pay attention and listen to me.	Social, emotional and psychological.	Coping with emotions, building positive self concept and building healthy relationships.
Things that made students feel sad	People ignore and don't pay attention. Fights/quarrels at home. People shouting at me. Name calling.	Emotional. Psychosocial Emotional. Emotional.	Building positive self concept. Coping skills and managing emotions. Dealing with difficult situations.
Things students will like to change	Be respectful Behaviour Do the right things Study my schoolwork Learn to speak to others	Behavioural Behavioural Behavioural Psychological Social.	Developing self awareness. Making correct decisions. Decision making skills Social skills.

### Appendix C

Data analysis sheet of YES/NO responses on how students feel about self.

ITEMS	# OF YES RESPONSES	# OF NO RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE OF YES RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE OF NO RESPONSES
1. I am overweight.	3	22	12%	88%
2. I wish I had the perfect body.	18	7	72%	28%
3. I eat properly.	20	5	80%	20%
<b>4. I wish I were different.</b>	<b>19</b>	6	<b>76%</b>	24%
5. It is difficult for me to respect and appreciate others.	15	10	60%	40%
<b>6. I enjoy working with others and I make friends easily.</b>	4	<b>21</b>	16%	<b>84%</b>
7. I think it is important to listen to what others have to say.	12	13	48%	62%
8. I need to work on my behaviour and attitude urgently.	16	9	64%	36%
<b>9. When people look at me I feel uncomfortable</b>	<b>22</b>	3	<b>88%</b>	12%
10. I feel very depressed and alone.	10	15	40%	60%
<b>11. I feel like a failure.</b>	<b>20</b>	5	<b>80%</b>	20%
12. I need help to control my anger.	15	10	60%	40%
<b>13. I wish I were brave enough to try new things.</b>	<b>21</b>	4	<b>84%</b>	14%
<b>14. Sometimes I feel useless and foolish.</b>	<b>19</b>	6	<b>76%</b>	24%
15. I am satisfied with the decisions and choices I make.	17	8	68%	32%
16. I am easily distracted.	18	7	72%	28%
17. I cannot cope with my problems at all.	15	10	60%	40%
<b>18. I am afraid of becoming a teenage parent.</b>	<b>25</b>	0	<b>100%</b>	0%
<b>19. I am afraid of getting HIV/AIDS &amp; STI'S.</b>	<b>25</b>	0	<b>100%</b>	0%
<b>20. I believe teenagers should engage in sexual practices.</b>	2	<b>23</b>	8%	<b>92%</b>

**Appendix D**

Data analysis sheet: Student's indication of issues they identified as affecting self and classmates.

LIST OF CONCERNS OR ISSUES	# OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
1. Poor eating habits.	3	12%
2. Overweight.	5	20%
3. Eating disorders: anorexia, bulimia.	0	0%
4. Addiction to alcohol.	3	12%
5. Addiction to tobacco.	4	16%
6. Drug abuse.	2	8%
7. Sexual abuse.	5	20%
8. Domestic violence.	14	56%
<b>9. Poverty.</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>10. Unable to cope with stress.</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>84%</b>
<b>11. Anxious and fearful.</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>76%</b>
12. Withdrawn and isolated.	9	36%
13. Lonely and Depressed.	11	44%
<b>14. Rejected and worthless.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>80%</b>
<b>15. Neglect.</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>96%</b>
<b>16. De-motivated and uninterested in schoolwork and other activities.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>80%</b>
17. Violent and aggressive.	15	60%
18. Indiscipline.	11	44%
<b>19. Unable to think and make decisions.</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>76%</b>
20. Have difficulty solving problems.	18	72%
<b>21. Unable to achieve and be successful.</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>22. Have problems learning.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>80%</b>
23. Live by morals and values.	3	12%
<b>24. Relationship with friends.</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>84%</b>
<b>25. Relationship with parents.</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b>26. Relationship with teachers, other adults and authority figures.</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>84%</b>
<b>27. Working with others.</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>80%</b>
28. Showing care, concern and respect for others.	14	56%
29. Difficulty communicating with others.	12	48%
30. Teenage pregnancy.	6	24%
31. HIV AIDS.	4	16%
32. STI'S	0	0%

**Appendix E: Analysis of Teacher questionnaire**

Teachers' responses coded to isolate the various topics from which interpretations and meanings juxtaposed/triangulated to ascertain **students' priority needs**.

Questions	Keywords/phrases from responses	Priority areas identified
1. During your interactions with students what have you observed about them?	Uninterested in learning. Visionless. Poor self development. Underexposed. Low self esteem. Lack of self respect. Disrespectful/ Obscene. Aggressive. Indiscipline. Unwilling. Easily distracted.	Self motivation. Self empowerment. Self concept. Self awareness/social skills. Self respect. Self control. Managing emotions. Self will. Developing concentration skills.
2. What have you observed about students when they interact with others?	Peer pressure: pleasing friends. No respect for friends, authority and others. No respect for rules. Aggressive behaviours.	Self worth/image. Citizenship/Communication skills. Citizenship/Social skills. Self awareness. Managing emotions.
3. Briefly describe three (3) behaviours students display that are of great concern to you.	Uninterested in self development. Low self esteem. Lack ambition/enthusiasm. Unfocussed. Unsettled. Disrespectful to authority. Indiscipline. Unmannerly.  Lack anger management.	Building self awareness/concept Self esteem. Self worth/image. Self empowerment/motivation. Developing concentration skills. Self awareness. Making positive decisions. Relationship/community building skills. Managing emotions/anger.
4. What do you think students need urgent attention with?	Discover hidden beauty and talents Self development. Anger management. Motivation to learn. Communication skills.	Self awareness/concept Building positive self concept. Managing emotions/anger. Self empowerment. Communication/Social skills.
5. What do you think are the major causes of this problem?	Dysfunctional home/family life: abusive relations. Lack positive role models. Peer pressure. Lack of morals/values. Poor self development.	Coping with stress and emotions. Analysing peer/media influences. Self evaluation and values clarification.
6. Indicate contributions you can make to assist students' healthy lifestyle development.	Exposure to positive behaviours. Field trips. Counselling. Self development programmes.	Personal development and interpersonal skills
7. Additional comments.	Parental involvement/ education	

**Appendix F: Analysis of interviews with Teachers, Safety Officers and Guidance Counsellor.**

Interviews transcribed and coded to isolate the various topics from which interpretations and meanings, juxtaposed to triangulate data to identify **students' priority needs**.

Questions	Keywords/phrases from responses	Priority areas identified
1. What are your views about the students of this school?	Unfocussed Unsettled Visionless Dependent Deceptive Aggressive Obscene Make wrong choices Easily influenced by peers Poor coping skills Unmotivated Uninterested Poor self concept Low self esteem Underexposed In search of love, care and concern. Lack manners and etiquette Disrespectful to self, peers and adults.	Self motivation. Self empowerment. Self independence. Self evaluation and values clarification Managing emotions. Self evaluation and values clarification Understand consequences of actions. Analysing peer/media influences Coping with emotions/stress. Self motivation/empowerment. Building positive self concept. Developing self esteem. Self awareness/social skills. Building positive self concept. Self evaluation, values clarification, communication and citizenship skills. Relationship building skills.
2. What factors do you think contribute to their troubling circumstances?	Lack of spiritual guidance/moral values. Lack of family values and Dysfunctional homes. Poverty	Self exploration, values clarification, communication and citizenship skills. Values clarification and social norms and beliefs. Dealing with difficult situations.
3. Can you suggest ways these concerns can be addressed?	Personal development and Self awareness activities. Improvement in home/family life. Teach vocational skills.	Building positive self concept, self awareness and self control. Building healthy relationships. Positive self esteem development.
4. What about the students?	Self development programmes Self awareness Self control.	Building positive self concept, self awareness and self control.