

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SELF-ESTEEM OF ADOLESCENT BOYS WITH AND WITHOUT LEARNING DISABILITIES IN AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL**Sibusiso Ntshangase,****Andile Mdikana****and****Candice Cronk**

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Participants in this study were twenty-nine adolescent boys (n = 29) between the ages of sixteen and eighteen years, who were attending an inclusive private school in the affluent suburb of Johannesburg. Fourteen participants had never been diagnosed with learning difficulties and had attended mainstream schools throughout their school careers. Fifteen participants were previously at a special school for learners with barriers to learning, entry into which required a diagnosis of a learning disability of some form. During the time of this study all participants had been in the mainstream school for a minimum period of two years. The Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory Third Edition (CFSEI 3) was utilised to elicit participants' perceptions of their abilities and attributes as well as feelings of self-worth. Data was analysed using the descriptive statistical procedure. A two independent sample T-test indicated that there were no significant differences found between the two groups of participants for each of the CFSEI self-esteem subscales as well as for Global self-esteem. While this research has limited generalizability, it appears to hint at the potential benefits of inclusion and it also highlights the potential value of self-esteem interventions as an important part of implementing inclusion in schools.

Introduction

The inclusion of learners with learning disabilities (LD) into mainstream schools is currently one of the foremost international education policy issues and has generated much debate. However there has been very little systematic research conducted on the many facets of inclusion. Manset and Semmel (1997) note that due to the strong advocacy emphasis associated with inclusionary practices, the body of data examining the impact of inclusion on learners with mild barriers to learning was relatively small. One of the fundamental aspects of inclusion that has not been adequately studied is learners' self-perceptions in inclusive educational settings (Kelly & Norwich, 2004). School experiences are acknowledged to play a fundamental role in the development of self-perceptions, which can in turn affect the learner's self-esteem in the long term (Elbaum & Vaughn, in press). The experiences of adolescent learners with LD in mainstream and remedial schools can be multifaceted and complex and yet, as Prinsloo (2001) notes, that the ways in which learners with LD experience inclusion or exclusion in education, as well as the effects of inclusion, has yet to be satisfactorily determined. It is thus vital for research to move beyond the exploration of the practices and impact of inclusion and study learners' understand, experiences and perceptions of inclusion on such personality aspects as self-worth, confidence and self-respect.

Self-esteem has been shown to have a pervasive and powerful impact on human emotion, cognition, behaviour and motivation (Campbell & Lavalley, 1993). The evaluations that individuals have about themselves and their competencies are vital aspects of self that can be pervasive and may influence all others aspects of conduct and psychological well-being (Shaffer, 2005). According to Harter (1993) high self-esteem is important not only for learners' academic achievement but also for their long-term

general well-being and personal development. Research consistently links self-esteem to the healthy development of children and adolescents and reveals that low self-esteem can affect such diverse areas as school adjustment, scholastic achievement, school behaviour and emotional adjustment (Covington, 1992; Martinez & Semrud-Clikeman, 2004). Heyman (1990) reports that a low self-esteem is also deemed a risk factor for depression amongst adolescents, as it leads to feelings of inadequacy or incompetence in many spheres of life (Harter, 1993). In addition, research has shown that low self-esteem is often a predictor for the use of maladaptive strategies, such as self-handicapping and learned helplessness, at school. Adolescents with low self-esteem tend to show high use of maladaptive strategies whereas those with high self-esteem use more adaptive achievement strategies (Aunola, Stattin & Nurmi, 2000). Learners with LD are particularly deemed to be at risk for low self-esteem because they experience significant difficulty in school, both in terms of academic performance and peer acceptance (Marcal, 1992; Martinez & Semrud-Clikeman, 2004).

Learners with LD, who are in mainstream schools, are deemed to be at a risk for low self-esteem associated with the significant difficulties they experience in mainstream schools, both in terms of academic performance and peer acceptance (Martinez & Semrud-Clikeman, 2004; Gans, Kenny, Ghany, 2003). These learners, due to their histories of repeated failure at school, are likely to feel as though academic outcomes are beyond their control, thus perceiving themselves as less competent than their peers. There has been widespread interest in researching the self-perceptions of children and adolescents with LD due to the concern that academic failure or difficulty may affect global self-concept; as well as due to the concern about the self-perpetuating cycle of failure (Heyman, 1990). This cycle starts with early failure, which leads to a lowered sense of competence, which then contributes to lowered expectations for future success, which in turn reduces achievement efforts and then results in further failure (Cooley & Ayres, 1988, cited in Gans et al, 2003; Heyman, 1990). Due to the propensity for such negative cycles to occur, it is pivotal that current research focus on specific aspects of self-perceptions with a view to gaining information that can later be used in the development of intervention strategies aimed at ameliorating negative self-perceptions. Interventions that address the emotional and social functioning of learners with barriers to learning are therefore vital (Martinez & Semrud-Clikeman, 2004). Proponents of inclusion argue that among the potential benefits for learners with LD within an inclusive environment are increases in self-esteem and self-worth, as learners within the inclusive environment are believed to be less likely to be stigmatised and perceived as being less able by their peers (Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1995; Banerji & Dailey, 1995, cited in Klingner, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen & Forgan, 1998; Grolnick & Ryan, 1990; Nowicki, 2003). Research on the benefits of inclusion for learners with LD has however been largely differing. For instance, on one hand, studies by Coleman (1983) and Grolnick & Ryan (1990) has shown that LD students in special school placement tend to have higher self-esteem overall than do those students with LD in mainstream school settings. On the other hand numerous studies report that integration of learners with LD into inclusive classrooms does not appear to benefit self-esteem overall (e.g. Shessel & Reiff, 1999, cited in Bakker & Bosman, 2003). Consequently research has been highlighting a need for continued research to address the conflicting data on self-perceptions and type of school settings, as well as to compare students with and without LD in the same school setting (Bear et al, 1991; Gans et al, 2003).

This study aimed to investigate the levels of self-esteem of adolescent boys who were attending an inclusive school. A comparison was drawn between learners who had previously been diagnosed with LD, and learners who have never been diagnosed with LD. For the purpose of this study self-esteem was conceptualized as a multi-dimensional entity comprising of academic, parental/home, social, personal as well as general self-esteem (Battle, 2002; Kelly & Norwich, 2004). The definition of an inclusive school was adopted from the South African Education White Paper 6 policy on inclusive education (Department of Education, 2001) which defines an inclusive school as a school environment that recognises and respect the differences among all learners and strives to build on the similarities. This is an environment which strives to change attitudes, behaviour, teaching methodologies, curricula to meet the needs of all learners and maximise the participation of all learners in the curricula.

It is hoped that the results of this study would provide insights into possible recommendations aimed at facilitating inclusion in schools.

Research questions

The research question for this study was;

- Is there a difference in the levels of self-esteem for male adolescent learners with learning disabilities in an inclusive school, and those without learning disabilities attending the same inclusive school?

Method

Participants

The sample for this study was derived from a target population of learners in a private inclusive school in an affluent suburb of Johannesburg. The school was targeted for reasons of practicality and accessibility by the researchers. A non-probability or purposive sample of learners (Welman & Kruger, 2001) was identified by the researchers and learners that matched the sample frame were recruited to participate in the study. Such a sampling strategy was appropriate as some of the participants had to be selected based on the criteria of them having previously attended a special school. The sample included adolescent boys between the ages of fifteen and eighteen years. One participant was fifteen years old; fourteen participants were sixteen years old; twelve participants were seventeen years old; and three participants were eighteen years old. Boys were selected as the specific target group of this research, due to the fact that there are generally more boys than girls with learning disabilities enrolled in specialised schools, and thus there are likely to be more boys with LD's that have been included in mainstream schools (Prinsloo, 2001). Boys were thus selected to allow for sample availability and to ensure comparability between the two sample groups.

The sample (N = 30) comprised two groups, with 15 participants in each group. The first group comprised adolescent boys that have attended mainstream schools throughout their schooling career. The second group comprised adolescent boys who have moved at some stage in their high school career from a specialised school into the mainstream. The sample included boys that had moved from the specialised school two to four years ago before this study was conducted. These boys were previously labelled with some form of learning disability, based on psycho-educational tests and assessments, upon entry into the specialised school. While 30 questionnaires were completed, the final sample only comprised 29 participants as after scoring one of the questionnaires from the Mainstream group, was deemed invalid due to a score of 7 out of 8 on the defensiveness scale. The recommended cut-off score is 4 out of 8, which indicates the extent to which the defensiveness of the child may diminish the validity of the quotient (Battle, 2002).

Research instrument

In this study self-esteem was assessed using the Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory (CFSEI-3) developed by Battle (2002). The CFSEI-3 has been used mostly in studies of children's self-esteem (Mann, Hosman, Schaalma & de Vries, 2004). It is a norm-referenced, self-report inventory, designed to elicit perceptions of personal traits and characteristics in children aged 6-0 through 18-11 years. The instrument is also designed to measure self-esteem of children across a range of grades starting from Grade 1 through Grade 12. It comprised of three age-related forms of the inventory. All three forms can be administered to either individuals or groups in 15 to 20 minutes. The inventory items are suitable for independent reading by learners with at-least average, grade three reading skills. All forms of the CFSEI-3 yield a total score, the Global Self-Esteem Quotient (GSEQ), which represents overall performance. This study employed the Adolescent Form of the CFSEI-3, designed for use with adolescents aged 13 through 18 years. This form contains a total of 67 items, grouped into five subscales, namely, Academic, General, Parental/Home, Social and Personal Self-Esteem. The subscale standard scores are summed to create a GSEQ (Battle, 2002).

The CFSEI-3 has been widely used in the South African context and has been proven to be reliable and valid for use in a multi-cultural context (Battle, 2002).

Research procedure

Formal permission to conduct the study was obtained from the deputy headmaster of the school. He received a copy of the research proposal for his perusal. The sample was then identified and selected in consultation with the deputy headmaster. The questionnaires were administered during school hours. The questionnaire was administered only after consent had been obtained from both the parents and the participants. Each participant received a subject information sheet that detailed the particulars of the study. In addition to the questionnaire, participants were required to complete a demographic cover sheet, which requested their age, grade level at school and race group. This information was used for the purpose of analysing the results.

The questionnaire was only administered in English. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaires independently without any assistance from any secondary parties. They were requested to direct all questions for clarity or assistance to the researcher. It too the participants between thirty

and forty minutes to completed the questionnaire. The CFSEI-3 was scored by the researcher according to the instructions in the manual.

Data analysis

A descriptive quantitative approach was adopted for the purpose of analysing data. In this study, the independent variable was the presence or absence of learning disabilities and the dependent variable was level of self-esteem. Participants fell into either a high or low self-esteem category for each self-esteem subscale (Academic, General, Parental/Home, Social, Personal), as well as for the Global self-esteem quotient. Descriptive statistics was utilised to reveal the ranges, means and standard deviations of the variable, self-esteem, with regard to the two sample groups.

A two independent sample t-test was then used to determine the difference between the means of the two independent groups. Any differences between the two sample groups in terms of the self-esteem subscales and the global self-esteem quotient was noted and tested for significance.

Results

Table 1 presents the ranges, means and standard deviations of the Global Self-Esteem of the two sample groups, namely included group (those learners who came from special school) and the mainstream group (those learners who have always been in mainstream schools). The Global self-esteem scores for the included group ranged from a minimum of 79 to a maximum of 119, with a mean of 97.47 and a standard deviation of 12.02. The self-esteem scores for the mainstream group ranged from a minimum of 85 to a maximum of 119, with a mean of 104.71 and a standard deviation of 9.75.

Table 1:
Means and Standard Deviations of the Sample's Global Self-Esteem

Sample Group	N	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
The included group	N = 15	79 - 119	X = 97.47	S X = 12.02
The mainstream group	N = 14	85 - 119	X = 104.71	S X = 9.75

The distribution of the Global Self-Esteem Quotients for the two groups is graphically presented in figure 1.

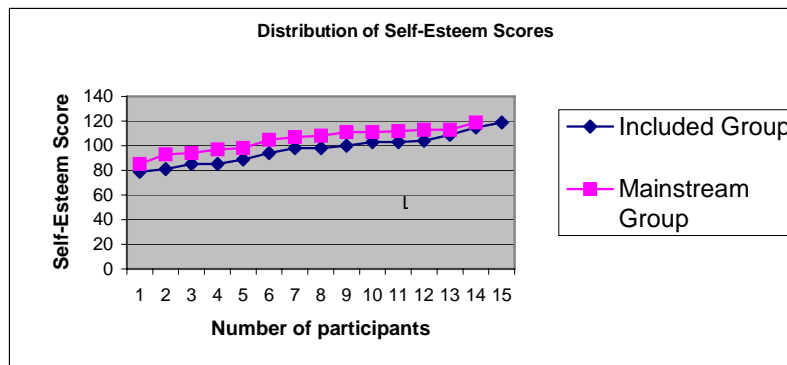


Figure 1: Distribution of Global Self-Esteem Quotients in Sample

The frequency distribution of the self-esteem scores as indicated by the Global Self-Esteem Quotient is graphically presented in figure 2. The results showed that in terms of Global Self-esteem, no participants' fell within the very high, high or the very low self-esteem category range. One participant from the included group was in the low self-esteem range. The remainder of the participants fell within the below average, average and above average categories. A large number of participants from both the groups, 15 in total - 8 from the Included group and 7 from the Mainstream group, fell within the average self-esteem range, which is expected from a normal distribution frequency. For the Mainstream group there was a total of 5 scores below the mean, and a total of 9 scores above the mean. This is in comparison to the Included group in which there were a total of 6 scores below the mean and 9 scores above the mean.

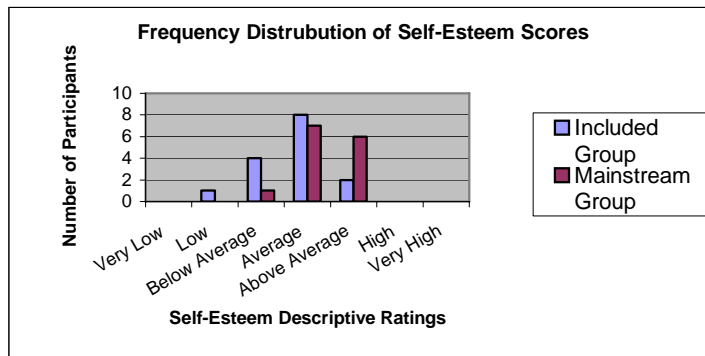


Figure 2: Frequency Distribution of the Self-Esteem Scores

Table 2 presents the ranges, means and standard deviations of the self-esteem subscales (Academic; General; Parental/Home; Social; Personal) for the two sample groups. The Academic self-esteem scores for the included group ranged from a minimum score of 3 to a maximum score of 12, with a mean of 7.6 and a standard deviation of 2.82. The academic self-esteem scores for the mainstream group ranged from a minimum of 4 to a maximum of 12, with a mean of 8 and a standard deviation of 2.45. Scores for General self-esteem ranged from 3 to 13, with a mean of 10.14 and a standard deviation of 2.83 for the included group and ranged from 6 to 13, with a mean of 10.86 and a standard deviation of 2.14 for the mainstream group. Scores for Parental/Home self-esteem ranged from 5 to 14, mean of 9.3 and a standard deviation of 3.01 for the included group, while the mainstream group showed a range of 4 to 14, mean of 11.36 and a standard deviation of 2.56. The social self-esteem scores showed a range of 5 to 13 - mean 10.47 and standard deviation 2.56 - for the included group, and a range of 9 to 13 - mean 11.43 and a standard deviation of 1.39. Personal self-esteem scores showed a range of 5 to 14, mean of 10.8 and standard deviation of 2.31 for the included group, and a range of 8 to 14, mean 12 and standard deviation of 2.04 for the mainstream group.

**Table 2:
Means and Standard Deviations of the Sample's Self-Esteem Sub-Scales**

Self-esteem Sub-Scale	Sample group	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Academic	Included N = 15	3 - 12	7.6	S _x = 2.82
	Mainstream N = 14	4 - 12	8	S _x = 2.45
General	Included	3 - 13	10.14	S _x = 2.83
	Mainstream	6 - 13	10.86	S _x = 2.14
Parental/ Home	Included	5 - 14	9.3	S _x = 3.01
	Mainstream	4 - 14	11.36	S _x = 2.56
Social	Included	5 - 13	10.47	S _x = 2.56
	Mainstream	9 - 13	11.43	S _x = 1.39
Personal	Included	5 - 14	10.8	S _x = 2.31
	Mainstream	8 - 14	12	S _x = 2.04

Figures 3 and 4 present information about the distribution of scores (converted to self-esteem category ratings) for the two sample groups for each of the self-esteem subscales - Academic, General, Parental/Home, Social and Personal. Across both groups, there were no scores that fell within either the Very High or High self-esteem categories.

Results for the included sample group (N = 15) are as follows. In terms of Academic self-esteem, 7 participants scored at an Average level, 4 participants scored at a Below Average level, 3 participants fell within the Low category and 1 participant fell within the Very low category. In terms of General self-esteem, there were 5 participants in the Above Average category, 8 participants in the Average category and 1 each in the Below Average and Very Low categories. In terms of Parental/Home self-esteem, 2 participants fell in the Above Average Category, 10 were in the Average category and 3 were in the Low category. For the Social subscale, 2 participants were at the Above Average level, 10 were at an Average level, 2 were in the Below Average category and 1 was in the Low category. For the Personal subscale, results indicated that 3 participants were in the Above Average category, 10 were in the Average category and there was 1 participant each in the Below Average and Low categories.

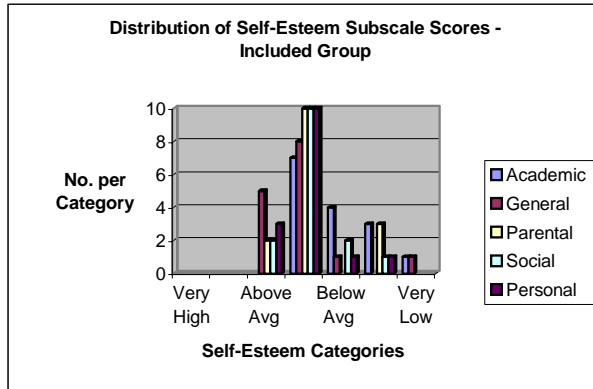


Figure 3: Distribution of Self-Esteem Subscale Scores by Category Rating - Included Group

Results for the Mainstream sample group (N = 14) are as follows. In terms of the Academic subscale, there were 8 participants in the Average category, and 3 participants each in both the Below Average and Low categories. For the General self-esteem subscale, 5 participants ranked in the Above Average category, 8 ranked in the Average category and 1 ranked in the Below Average category. In terms of Parental/Home self-esteem, there were 5 participants that fell in the Above Average category, 8 in the Average category and 1 in the Low category. In terms of Social self-esteem, 3 participants were rated at an Above Average level, while 11 participants rated at the Average level. The Personal subscale showed 7 participants each in both the Above Average and Average categories.

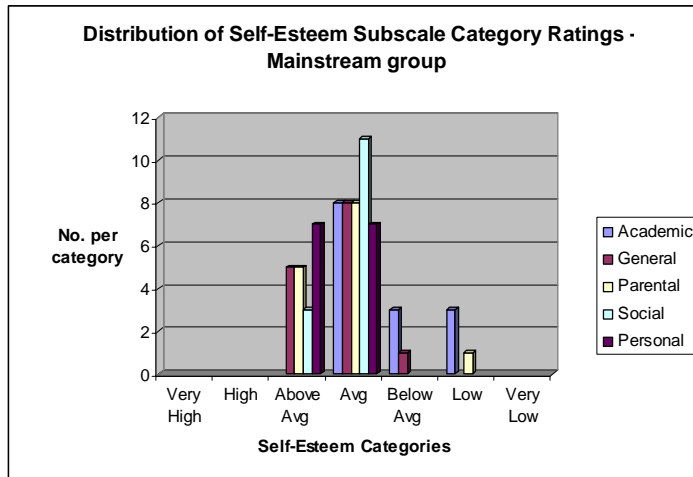


Figure 4: Distribution of Self-Esteem Subscale Scores by Category Rating - Mainstream Group

Analysis of Results of the T-tests

T-tests were conducted to determine whether there was any statistical difference in the means of the two groups, for the Global self-esteem quotients, as well as for the subscales of self-esteem. By viewing self-esteem as a multidimensional entity, this research was able to determine the difference between the sample groups on different facets of self-esteem, thus allowing for a comparison of Global self-esteem as well as nuanced interpretations of the different facets of self-esteem. Results of the two independent sample T-tests are presented in table 3.

Table 3:
Results of the T-Tests

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	df	t	
GLOBAL SELF-ESTEEM					
Included Group N = 15	X = 97.46	S = 12.02	t = 27	1.76	Not significant
Mainstream Group N = 14	X = 104.71	S = 9.75			
SELF-ESTEEM SUBSCALES					
ACADEMIC					
Included Group	X = 7.6	S = 2.82	t = 27	0.98	Not significant
Mainstream Group	X = 8	S = 2.45			
GENERAL					
Included Group	X = 10.14	S = 2.83	t = 27	0.77	Not significant
Mainstream Group	X = 10.86	S = 2.14			
PARENTAL/HOME					
Included Group	X = 9.3	S = 3.01	t = 27	1.04	Not significant
Mainstream Group	X = 11.36	S = 2.56			
SOCIAL					
Included Group	X = 10.47	S = 2.56	t = 27	0.78	Not significant
Mainstream Group	X = 11.43	S = 1.39			
PERSONAL					
Included Group	X = 10.8	S = 2.31	t = 27	1.48	Not significant
Mainstream Group	X = 12	S = 2.04			

** Significance tested level ($p < 0.01$)

No significant difference could be demonstrated between the Global self-esteem quotients of the two groups. Similarly, results of the T-tests for each of the self-esteem subscales show no statistical difference between the two sample groups. Significance was tested at the 0.01 level of significance.

Discussion

This study aimed to assess whether there was any difference in the self-esteem levels of adolescent boys, with some form of learning disability, who had moved from a special school setting and had been in an inclusive school setting, and adolescent boys without learning disabilities, who have attended mainstream schooling throughout their school careers.

The difference in Global self-esteem levels was noted for the two groups which suggest that the included and mainstream adolescent boys do not have disparities in their overall levels of self-esteem. This result is very encouraging for schools promoting inclusive practices as it implies that overall sense of worth for included and mainstreamed learners is not disparate. Such indications are in line with other research findings that have reported no differences in the global self-worth of children with and without LD (Bear & Minke, 1996, cited in Gans, et al, 2003).

Overall there was an indication that about one-third of the total sample showed a self-esteem level below the average level. This point to the potential need for self-esteem interventions aimed at ameliorating negative self-esteem particularly at schools offering inclusive placements. It also hints at the socio-emotional needs of students who are included in the mainstream. Importantly, the learners that showed low levels of Global self-esteem were those participants that also showed low levels of academic self-esteem. This finding is consistent with studies that indicate that learners' global perceptions may be affected by their lowered academic self-esteem levels (Marcal, 1992).

It is also important to note that even though the majority of learners indicated a healthy high esteem, literature indicate that some adolescents may portray an image of high esteem in order to be socially accepted (Elksnin & Elksnin, 2004). Interventions aimed at promoting self-esteem therefore need not to focus on those individuals whose esteem is low only, but equally important is a focus on those individuals whose esteem is high mainly due to a desire to be seen as socially desirable. Any future intervention dealing with issues of self-esteem would need to deal with the notion of trying to present a very positive image of the self as a kind of compensatory measure to portray a high self-esteem.

A review of the Academic self-esteem scale results within each group indicates that there were 7 participants from the included group and 8 participants from the mainstream group whose Academic self-esteem was on an Average level – which is expected from a normally distributed sample. There

were 4 participants from the included group and 3 participants from the mainstream group who displayed Below Average Academic self-esteem. There were 3 participants from each group that displayed Low academic self-esteem and 1 participant from the included group whose Academic self-esteem was at a Very Low level. There were thus 8 participants - just over half the included group, whose academic self-esteem was below the average range. Such findings may indicate the potential role of Social Comparison Theory as when the learners with LD compare themselves with typically achieving peers they tend to perceive their abilities as being far lower than they would if they compared themselves with other individuals with LD – learners with LD are not easily identified in the mainstream (Renick & Harter, 1989, cited in Gans, et al, 2003). In addition, there were 6 participants from the mainstream group whose academic self-esteem was below average levels. The results were interesting in that they were quite similar for the two groups. Such results, suggests that there are many individuals who have less than adequate perceptions about their abilities to perform academic tasks. This suggests that students from both groups may need support in their academic efforts, and as such, interventions aimed at improving academic self-esteem in the classroom as a whole could be valuable.

In terms of general self-esteem, the T-test indicated no significant difference between the two groups, which suggests that both groups appear to perceive their overall self-worth on similar levels. This finding supports previous studies that show that self-concept scores tend to be similar for learners with and without LD with respect to friendship, appearance and self-worth (Banerji & Dailey, 1995; Vaughn, Elbaum & Schumm, 1996, cited in Salend & Garrick Duhaney, 1999).

An interpretation of the general self-esteem scores within each group shows that there were 5 participants from each group whose general self-esteem was at an Above Average level, and 8 participants from each group who fell in the Average self-esteem category. There was a participant from each group whose general self-esteem was recorded as being Below Average and 1 participant from the included group who fell in the Very Low category. Findings for general self-esteem are encouraging, especially for the included group, in that equal numbers of participants for the two groups fell within the Above Average and Average categories which suggests adequate perceptions of self-worth. Participants in the Below Average and very Low categories require self-esteem interventions to try and improve their overall feelings of self-worth. In addition, those individuals in the Above Average category may require some intervention to teach them to evaluate themselves and their abilities appropriately and accurately and not in a socially desirable way (Battle, 2002).

The results of the T-test for Parental/Home self-esteem subscale showed no significant difference between the two groups suggesting that there is no difference between the individuals' perceptions of their status at home. Such subjective perceptions include perceptions about relationships with parents and/or guardians and perceptions about how parents and guardians view the individual (Battle, 2002).

A review of the Parental/Home self-esteem scores within each group indicates that there were a large number of participants in the Average range (10 from the included group and 8 from the mainstream group). There were also 2 participants from the included group and 5 participants from the mainstream group that ranked at an Above Average level. The finding of 3 participants from the included group and 1 participant from the mainstream group, in the Low esteem category is disconcerting and indicates that future self-esteem interventions may need to involve the active participation of parents. Self-esteem plays a role in many systems of an individual's life and thus it is important to include key role-players like parents and teachers when planning and conducting interventions.

Results of the T-test for the Social self-esteem subscale indicated no statistical difference between the two groups, which suggests no difference in the way that included students and mainstream students perceive the quality of their relationships with peers. This is an important finding in that this research indicates perceived quality of peer relationships to be similar for the two groups which is inconsistent with other research that has reported that individual's with LD's may show deficits in social behaviour and may be unaccepted, rejected or ignored by their peers without LD (Pavri, et al, 2000).

Interpretation of the Social self-esteem subscale scores within each group hints at the potential social impacts and benefits of inclusive practices. There were 2 participants from the included group and 3 from the mainstream group in the Above Average category, and 10 participants from the included group and 11 participants from the mainstream group that fell in the Average category. This suggests that most of the sample have adequate perceptions about the quality of their social relationships. While these findings are encouraging, there remain some included learners whose social self-esteem is in the below average range. There were 2 individuals from the included group whose social esteem was

ranked in the Below Average category and 1 individual from the included group in the Low category. The presence of these included learners in the below average and low categories suggests that some included individuals may have difficulties forming social relationships with their peers. Such a finding is in accordance with research that has noted that students with LD may internalise rejection by their peers, which may in turn influence their feelings about social competence and their ability to initiate and sustain social relationships in the future (Gans, Kenny, Ghany, 2003). It is essential that these individuals are monitored and provided with support where necessary.

Results of the T-test for the Personal subscale indicated no statistically significant difference between the way the two groups perceive their most intimate thoughts about their self-worth and anxieties. Personal self-esteem is a very important facet of overall self-esteem and thus it is very encouraging that no difference was noted in the level of personal self-esteem for the two groups. This finding is in accordance with previous research that reported that despite possible lowered academic self-esteem, individuals with LD in inclusive settings tend to display positive feelings about their overall self-worth (Bear, et al, 1998).

Interpretation of the Personal self-esteem subscale scores indicates that there were 2 included participants in the Above Average range. The majority of participants from the included group fell into the Average category, which indicates at least adequate perceptions of one's self-worth. Half the participants from the mainstream group fell into the Above Average category and half fell into the Average category. There was one participant from the included group in the Below Average category and one participant in the Low category.

Conclusion

The findings of this research, while exploratory, descriptive and limited in generalisability have hinted at the potential benefits of inclusion on the self-esteem levels of included learners with LD. There was no statistically significant difference noted between the two groups for each of the self-esteem subscale dimensions, as well as for global self-esteem, which is a very encouraging result. The research findings however also noted that some included individuals might be in need of academic, social and emotional support when they move into the mainstream. The research also indicated that mainstreamed individuals may also benefit from self-esteem interventions. It is hoped that this research will stimulate further research in this area, and will contribute to providing some information that may be valuable in the design of future self-esteem interventions at a secondary school level.

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