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Evaluating Self-Esteem Levels of Brazilian and Portuguese Adolescents

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Abstract

From a bibliographical study, based on relevant authors in this field, it is found that a more positive self-image and self-esteem contribute to the formation of intra and interpersonal healthy and affectionate increasing the action in the educational environment. This exploratory study aims to determine the levels of self-esteem of adolescents, comparing data among students in Portugal and Brazil. Therefore, participants were 189 Portuguese students and 176 Brazilian students, from secondary school/medium public schools in these countries, responding to Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, adapted for each population. For data analysis, descriptive statistics were used to compare means and subjected to SPSS. The results showed lower levels of self-esteem in Portuguese students (M = 3.22 and D. P. = 0.58) than those in Brazilian students (M = 3.45 and D. P. = 0.41). Although both means are elevated, the comparison between these two samples is significantly different (t = 3.275, *p* = 0.001), which enables to say that Brazilian have the best self-esteem than Portuguese, also that these adolescents indicate positive levels of self-esteem, demonstrating to be pleased with him/selves. Cultural factors may influence these results and the environment in which students are placed can contribute to the construction of self-esteem, from interpersonal relationships present in their social context, the evaluation of each under their own experiences as success or failure, as well as the affective evaluation, which is the foundation for a more positive self-esteem.

1. Introduction

This paper addresses the issues addressed in the Postgraduate Program in Education, Research Line Person and Education, at Pontifical Chatolic University of Rio Grande do Sul—PUCRS, mainly developed by the authors, who belong to the group of Research on Affectivity in Education (Dohms, Lettnin, Mendes, Mosquera, & Stobäus, 2014), addressing aspects involved in the feelings and affection in Education, as topics that should be further investigated and debated in academia, on the assumption that teachers should know how to deal with it better ourselves, better known as express their feelings and deal with affection, to also able to relate better with your colleagues, students and families of students. We presented the initial ideas (Lettnin, Dohms, Mendes, Stobäus, & Mosquera, 2013), at the II Ibero-American Congress of Health Psychology.

The theoretical framework of our research group is on the positive aspects of a healthy human development, in a perspective of the Health Psychology and Positive Psychology, deepening those factors driving the positive development of the person during his/her development in all the life cycle (lifespan approach), based on elements for health promotion, including studies on self-image, self-esteem and self-actualization.

Starting from a literature study, based on authors like Maslow (n.d., 1991); Mosquera (1978); Stobäus (1983); Rogers (1997); André & LeLord (2000); Assis, Avanci, Silva, Malachi, Santos, & Oliveira (2003); Goñi & Fernández (2009); Sbicigo, Bandeira, & Dell'Aglio (2010) and Monteiro, Azevedo, Sobreiro, & Constantino (2012), it was found that a self-image and self-esteem more realistic, as sustained by Mosquera & Stobäus (2006), considered positive, contributing to the formation of intra and interpersonal healthy and loving relationships enhances the activity in the educational environment. In a more specific direction to teacher's welfare, we published also papers and books, as Jesus, Vieira, Mosquera, Stobäus, & Esteve (2004); Jesus, Sampaio, Stobäus, & Mosquera (2008); Jesus et al. (2011); Jesus (2001a, b, 2004).

Latest studies of the group in the area of Education, addressing the issue of self-image and self-esteem of teachers, such as Dohms & Lettnin (2011) and Mendes, Dohms, Lettnin, Zacharias, Mosquera, & Stobäus (2012) show that production concerning this theme focuses his analysis much more in adolescents.

Thus, the present exploratory study aimed to verify the levels of self-esteem of adolescents, comparing the data between students from Portugal and Brazil, with 189 Portuguese and 176 Brazilian students, public school students of Secondary Education in Portugal, and High School in Brazil.

2. Self-Image and Self-Esteem

There are two components that are important to know, when we want to understand the development of a health personality: self-image and self-esteem.

Mosquera (1982, apud Stobäus, 1983: 53) notes that "*the self-image and self-esteem are closely linked to the identity process and that, in some way, form a structure that have personalogycal inter-influences, which helps the individual to have personal coherence and consistency*".

Stobäus (1983) points out that self-esteem depend on external circumstances which, in turn, inform the inner, constituting a delicate game in which the subjects should become more involved in self-knowledge and understanding of provoking factors and precipitants, and that the size self-esteem is closely linked to self-image, since they are strongly linked to knowledge of self.

Maslow (1991) emphasizes that all people in our society (except a few pathological exceptions) have a need or desire generally high valuation of themselves, with a firm and stable base; needs of self-respect or self-esteem and esteem of others.

Timm, Mosquera, & Stobäus (2008: 44) say:

The nature of self-image, self-esteem based, resides in individual self-knowledge and the development of their own potential, in the perception of feelings, attitudes and ideas that relate to the personal dynamics. […] Self-esteem is part of a process of identity that leads to self-knowledge, the appreciation of possibilities in overcoming the trust and attempt to auto-refresh and self-realization.

Mosquera (1978: 83) believes that human life is characterized in a constant search for meaning, with the fulfillment of the human being consists in projecting itself beyond itself, creating a deep feeling about his integrity and value, and complements saying that "*self-conception and self-realization are the result of qualitative experiences we give our experiences and our position in the world*".

As Maslow (n.d.: 192-193), "*the human being is both what it is and what it longs to be*", *also demonstrating* "*in its own nature, a pressure to be more complete, each carrying the more perfect the human condition*".

For Rogers (1997), humans need for acceptance, and when that is given them move toward self-actualization.

According to psychologists André & LeLord (2000: 30), one needs as human beings to satisfy two needs: to be loved and to feel competent (fit, active). They call these food needs of self-esteem, because "*to be loved and not to be admired and treasured infantilizes but be estimated without feeling appreciated is frustrating*", therefore consider that both are essential to a positive/real self-esteem.

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Mosquera, Stobäus, Jesus, & Herminio (2006), based on the ideas of García del Cura, exhibit traces of the power that would be considered as a more realistic and positive self-esteem: be safe and trust yourself, seek moments of happiness, recognize their qualities/defects not consider himself superior (or inferior) to others, be flexible, open and understanding, be able to overcome your failures, learn to establish healthy relationships with others, be critical, constructive and consistent with themselves and others. The authors emphasize that, have a self-image and self-esteem, more positive/real, encourage our interpersonal relationships because the person knows better and more like yourself, in addition to achieving better understand and like the others, becoming people most affectionate and respectful of differences and singularities.

Goñi & Fernández (2009: 28) distinguish between self-expression and self-esteem, explaining that "[…] *self-concept refers to the idea that each person has of herself*, *whereas self-esteem refers to the case* (*esteem*, *love*) *that each feels for himself*; *the first term refers to the cognitive or perceptual dimension and the second evaluative or affective aspect*".

To Mosquera (1987: 62), the self is "[…] *what we think is our person and involves*, *our character*, *status*, *appearance and at the same time*, *our need to project ourselves beyond time*".

Santos, Antunes, & Bernardi (2008) state that the structured self is the product of a well-structured self-image and self-esteem, which are formed in interaction with/in social, being related.

It is understandable, therefore, that these terms are correlated with each other, and also with self-image, which, according to Mosquera & Stobäus (2008: 116), serves as a basis for self-esteem, as "*resides in the individual self-knowledge and even the development of their own potential*, *in the perception of feelings*, *attitudes and ideas that relate to the personal dynamics*".

The authors also say that self-esteem is one of the main constructs of personality, which is rooted in esteem and positive/real than the image people have of themselves. This image is built based on what others comment on how they see the person and how she herself feels and perceives, accepting or rejecting the external information (from the other) and internal (to you), and assigning a value of affective esteem herself. Consider that the more real for the self-esteem, the more positive it is for the subject himself, however, the more unreal, more distorted and negative someone sees the others and realizes himself.

Mosquera, Stobäus, Jesus, & Herminio (2006: p. 4) differentiates self-image self-esteem when considering the first as "[…] (*re*)*cognize that we have of ourselves*, *as we feel our potentials*, *feelings*, *attitudes and ideas* […]", and the second as "[…] *as like ourselves*, *appreciate the* […]".

Goñi and Fernández (2009) state that the hetero-esteem [esteem from the others] (estimated/appreciation of others toward the person) serves as the basis for self-esteem, primarily arising from the views of parents after the other family, his teachers and his circle of friends. From this, a person builds an interpretive March itself, throughout its development, allowing self-esteem does not change each others opinion, but being able to modify itself when necessary.

The same authors also explain that the self has the following postulates: is organized and structured, as the person categorizes information about you; has an evolutionary character, i.e. is stable, but not immutable, it will be developing over a lifetime, based on situations experienced; and is multidimensional, i.e., assumes various domains, such as academic self-concept, social, personal and physical.

Stobäus (1983: 55) considers the self "[…] *provides a reference framework for the subject itself*, *giving you a globalizing vision of their own person*", and also says that the self is formed by:

[…] *Feedback from the social and physical environment*, *as this feedback provides keys that help the person to describe the type of person she is*, *defining the boundaries of their involvements and commitments that underlie the assumptions she makes about how it should be treated by others and how to treat others.*

Mendes, Dohms, Lettnin, Zacharias, Mosquera, & Stobäus (2012) add that the self includes a descriptive di-

mension associated with an affective self-image and self-esteem linked to. Thus, these authors understand that self-image is a description that elaborates the subject itself (internal), not being exempt from the opinion of others (external). Already self-esteem is associated with how much the guy likes to believe it is (internal), this one affective aspect connected also with the way others say they appreciate the (external) and how he believes others will appreciate (internal). With this understanding, we elaborated a scheme (**Figure 1**) that can help to elucidate the relationship between self-concept (AC), self-image (AI) and self-esteem (AE), as presented in the above publication.

In summary, it is interpreted that the self-image and self-esteem are, respectively, the perception and appreciation that makes you the person and the two constructs are linked together with the way others say they see the estimate and considers was found that these act in the preparation of the self, signifying that all social relations and experiences are fundamental to the construction of self.

3. Adolescents Self-Esteem

Studies such related by Sbicigo, Bandeira, & Dell'Aglio (2010) confirm that the phase of life is the most researched adolescence, Robins et al. (2001, apud Sbicigo, Bandeira, & Dell'Aglio, 2010) distinguished as a period determined by changes—physical, social, cognitive, sexual, emotional—that are directly linked to the formation and maintenance of the psychological characteristics of this age.

Monteiro, Azevedo, Sobreiro, & Constantino (2012: 42) consider that this phase was strongly institutionalized as a stage marked by change and conflict, especially because it is an undefined phase between childhood and adulthood, which led another phase of development with its own characteristics.

Mosquera (1974: 41) already pointed out that "*the socio-cultural point of view, adolescence begins earlier and earlier and ends later and later*". Reaffirms that social and emotional maturation of the adolescent as well as the development of self-control, tolerance, perception of adequacy, feelings of belonging, constructive and creative expressions of emotions, and the development of self-esteem depend on the satisfaction of certain requirements such as: security, social status, physical and psychological adjustment, and new experiences.

According to Harter (1999, cited Sbicigo, Bandeira, & Dell'Aglio, 2010: 396), is in adolescence that "*the notion of eigenvalue becomes a central aspect because individuals develop cognitive skills that allow them to perform abstractions about the self*".

Also in this period the perception of others in relation to oneself is replaced utmost importance, which, according to research revisited by these authors, may lead to more real (or not) perception reflected in their levels of self-esteem.

Avanzini (n.d., apud Mosquera, 1974) ensures that adolescence is the stage in which the person has the most intense desire to know him/herself, making this knowledge a necessity, because it is a time when the adolescent is seeking to acquire personal meaning and value.

Mosquera (1974: 43) states that "*the search for sense of teen self-esteem is considered as a value and it provides cohesion as a person, a behavioral unit that provides you a self-regulatory self-image*".

To Sbicigo, Bandeira, & Dell'Aglio (2010: 1), the construct self-esteem of adolescents has not been well studied at the national level, especially with regard to the samples with a larger number of participants, hindering the understanding of it in our culture. According their study, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) obtained was 0.80, and global Cronbach alpha coefficient was 0.70 (positive items 0.76; negative 0.77):

The sample was composed of 4.757 *adolescents, with ages between* 14 *and* 18 *years old (M =* 15.77*; SD =* 1.22*) in nine Brazilian cities. Participants responded to an adapted version of the RSS for Brazil. Exploratory factorial analysis showed a bidimensional structure, with* 51.4% *of explained variance. This result was supported by confirmatory factor analysis. The internal consistency analysis by Cronbach alpha coefficient, composite reliability and extracted variance indicated good reliability.*
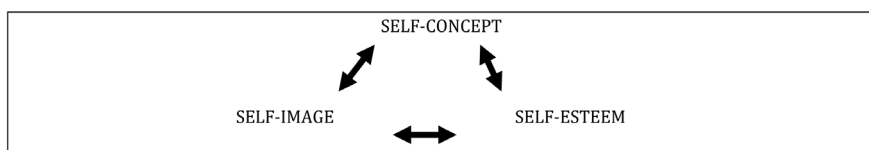

Figure 1. Relationship between self-concept, self-image and self-esteem. Source: Mendes, Dohms, Lettnin, Zacharias, Mosquera, & Stobäus (2012: 8).

In this sense Assis, Avanci, Silva, Malachi, Santos, & Oliveira (2003: p. 671) state that the Brazilian reality "*there is a lack of studies focusing on the self-concept and self-esteem, especially adolescents*", making it difficult to therefore, the perceived view of themselves and their competence, which is reflected in their personal and social life. The authors also add that the National Advisory Mental Health American Council, in 1996, considered self-esteem as the key indicator of mental health or psychological well-being.

Even with the passing years, although studies evidenced by Dohms and Lettnin (2011) and Mendes, Dohms, Lettnin, Zacharias, Mosquera, & Stobäus (2012), in the area of Education, about this concept (self-esteem) is directed at teenage audiences demonstrating greater concern, most of them are linked to some negative aspect as violence, drug addiction, social risk, homophobia, pathologies, among others.

According to Harter (1989, apud André & LeLord, 2000: 88), there are five areas of the constitution of the self-esteem of children and adolescents more relevant:

[…] *the physical aspect* (*Liking others*?); *athletic competition* (*Am I good*? *I run quickly in sport*, *I defend myself*?); *popularity among their peers* (*like to me in class*, *I have many friends in school*?); *behavioral conformity* (*Adults consider me a trusted person I respect social rules*: *politeness*, *discipline*, *etc.*?); *academic achievement* (*I have correct results*?).

André & LeLord (2000: 95) point out that, for children, there are four "sources" self-esteem, and the importance of these sources is modified according to age. These four sources of judgment may also be considered sources of pressure in relation to the social roles they must play in support of their self-esteem: their parents, their teachers, their peers and their closest friends. For younger children parental opinion is more relevant. As for children ranging from three to six years—when there is an expansion in its network of relationships—parental opinion is not discarded, but the opinion of their peers begin to have some relevance in particular with regard to the physical aspect, athletic competence and popularity. With the arrival of adolescence, there is a greater separation of the parents and the principal sources of self-esteem become the people outside of your social circle. However, according to these authors, "*the impact of parental approval remains very large and truly only begins to decrease when the young leaves the family*". Also emphasize that children and adolescents who have higher/realistic levels of self-esteem demonstrate that they are competent in the areas that seem important to them, although it may provide poor results in others.

The difference between life at home and school life can generate large effects on self-esteem of a child, as in the school environment is expanding its network of relationships therefore has more external influences.

André & LeLord (2000: 105) reported that a high self-esteem is "*associated with more adapted behaviors, such as seeking social support, relative confidence in the future, ability to undermine an active confrontation with reality, etc.*", which usually stems from a supportive home environment. On the other hand, "*poor self-esteem goes more easily associated with unproductive attitudes that may aggravate the situation: fatalism, avoidance of the problem, negative anticipations, […]*"; This confirms the finding of experts who claim that the higher levels of self-esteem a person present better your results will be acquired by it.

According Mosquera (1974: 50):

You could say that adolescence is closely linked to the achievement of self-esteem that is solid enough to be able to stand before a world of continuous requests and evidence. It is not simple, however, the possibility of creating a self-image and self-esteem and realistic, because the socio-cultural dependence and delimits, while bombarding the possibilities of a psychological balance, through the demands which require effect lead to behaviors that often were not properly prepared to enable a healthy psychological adjustment.

Mosquera, Stobäus, Jesus, & Herminio (2006) state that it is necessary to develop realistic and positive aspects related to self-image and self-esteem in school environments, as these contexts influence the development of the subject.

Soon, more positive self-image and self-esteem contribute to the formation of intra and interpersonal healthier and more loving relationships in the educational environment, optimizing the pedagogical action and describing the process of teaching and learning.

Coopersmith and Feldman (apud Stobäus, 1983) highlighted that one should experience successes and failures and feel responsible for them, so you get a realistic and healthy self-concept. Reflecting further, that today would be the (auto) termed limits, in this case the internalized from the socialization process for a (self) as real personal ongoing construction possible.

Rogers (1997) believes that meaningful learning is that which causes modifications, either in individual behavior, in guiding future action chosen or even in attitude and personality, and that is not limited to the increase

of knowledge, but transposing all parcels of existence.

4. Comparing the Data: The Self-Esteem of Adolescents from Portugal and Brazil

The participated of the survey were 365 adolescents, with 189 junior high school students from three public schools in Faro, southern Portugal, and 176 high school students from a public school in Porto Alegre, the southern region of Brazil.

The Portuguese sample consisted of 115 female students (60.8%) and 74 male students (39.2%), distributed for the most part, respectively, of the 11th year (60.8%), 10th year (21.2%) and 12th year (18%), between an age group ranging from 15 to 21 years and their average age M = 16.8 years (SD = 1.17). Already in the Brazilian sample, 96 students are female, accounting for 54.5%, and 80 students are males representing 45.5% of the sample, which is distributed evenly across the years that make up the stage in the study, 31.8% of the 1st year, 33% of 2nd year and 3rd year of 35.2%, with a distribution of ages 14 to 18 years, with a mean age M = 16.02 years (SD = 1.031).

Being a comparative research, it is necessary to characterize the educational systems of each country. In the Portuguese educational system, secondary education target of this study, includes the 10, 11, 12 years and is not mandatory. This stage of education is divided by most schools, in regular and professional. Students who choose to pursue the professional status of technicians and students that make your choice at regular crave entry into a university. Regardless of the model, specific areas of training are offered for both and must be defined by the students at the conclusion of the 9th year. Brazilian educational system for this stage of education, called high school, is also composed of three years, but unlike Portugal is a mandatory step and does not guarantee access to higher education.

Therefore, access to university differs in each country. Portuguese students have their guaranteed entry after 3 years of regular education, as the arithmetic mean of all disciplines that will define the professional course to be held by Portuguese student, disregarding their skills, abilities, interests and preferences. In Brazil, the student who intends entering university must go through a selection process after completing high school, called ENEM, or enters the university by an examination process called Vestibular, but it is he who makes the choice of his profession, preserving since principle of the autonomy and individuality, regardless of the outcome of this educational stage.

In this sense, what one sees is that the school also investigated in Brazil, enables and encourages the development of this autonomy from the beginning, because, unlike the Portuguese schools that were targeted in this study, the curriculum of the Brazilian school has a rigid part and other flexible, although both are mandatory, the flexible part of the high school student can opt for subjects, contents or topics that are of interest to the personal and professional development. It is believed that this account helps in forming the identity of the student, because while it approaches the interest of young people, bringing meaning and purpose to their learning, fosters an environment of respect for individuality, in that satisfaction and self-fulfillment of students are prioritized, seeking to facilitate the construction of the self-esteem of the student.

Order to better respond to the research objective, we applied the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), adapted for each of the populations, being in the Portuguese population by Santos (2003) and the Brazilian population by Hutz (2000), who maintained the assessment scales as a unidimensional measure, equivalent to the original instrument psychometric characteristics. This objective scale assesses overall feelings of self esteem. It consists of 10 items that score 1 ("strongly agree") to 4 ("strongly disagree"). A higher score represents higher self-esteem. We note that five items of the scale are reversed (2, 5, 6, 8, 9).

Furthermore, André and LeLord (2000) interprets the result of self-esteem of the scale Rosenberg, can be classified as follows: 10 to 16 points suggests a trend towards low self-esteem, from 17 to 33 points and an average between 34 and self-esteem 40 points correspond to high self-esteem, warning that the result shows the current time of the person.

Analyzing data using SPSS for descriptive statistics and comparison of means, the results showed lower levels of self-esteem in Portuguese students (X = 3.22, and SD = 0:58) than the Brazilian students (X = 3.45 and SD = 0:41). While the average Portuguese self-esteem is classified as average, and the Brazilian self-esteem is considered high, as André & LeLord (2000). According to the classification of the authors, although both results are close, the comparison between these two populations showed a significant difference (t = 3.275, $p \geq 0.001$), which enables the students say that Brazil have higher self-esteem than of Portugal. Soon these teens point to more positive levels of self-esteem, demonstrating to be pleased with themselves.

When investigating the sex/gender variable among 365 students in the sample, we realize that there is a difference statistically significant between boys and girls (t = 2.391, p = 0.017), but deepen this result, the analyzes revealed no differences significant between female and male students in the sample of Portugal, unlike the Brazilian sample, in which students demonstrated better self-esteem than students, pointing significant difference (t 2 = 552, p = 0.012).

The result of this part of research to suggest that the gender variable may be relevant according to the context in which the students are, although the study Sbicigo, Bandeira, & Dell'Aglio (2010) show that there are controversies about levels of self-esteem and its relation to gender issues. The research carried out by these authors in large Brazilian cities, with the participation of 4757 students, aged 14 and 18 who also responded to the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale used in research and found no significant differences between genders, although referenced studies that this variable had a relationship with the self-esteem construct.

By analyzing the percentage frequency of positive and negative scale items Rosenberg alone, considering both positive scoring levels (strongly agree and agree somewhat) you can check that there are some differences between students of Portugal and Brazil, as shown Table 1.

Despite three items of positive indicators—with satisfaction, value and have positive attitudes—the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale had a greater frequency in Portuguese students in relation to Brazilian, which seems to define the difference between the averages found on the level of self-esteem participant in this study is the value of the percentage frequency of negative indicators, as shown in Table 1 comparison of percentage frequency between Portuguese and Brazilian students in positive items is very close, while the percentage frequency of Portuguese students, referring to items that correspond to low self-esteem, equivalent to almost three times the percentage of Brazilian students who are to realize these feelings.

Another aspect that draws attention is related to positive levels of scale—strongly agree and agree somewhat—that reveal the assessment of students on each feeling. While Brazilian students agree feel a bit of negative feelings concerning his person, there are Portuguese students who, beyond that degree of feeling, feel really agree, demonstrating to express a judgment of less value to Brazilians.

We believed that the Brazilian school curriculum, based on the acquisition of skills and competencies aimed at autonomy and the development of students' critical sense may be contributing to their self-esteem, making this assessment is more positive because Brazilian students see themselves with better qualities, able to accomplish their goals, more competent and proud, they feel useful, value themselves more and not feel like failures. On the other hand, the negative results of the Portuguese may have been influenced by the economic situation that pervades the country, reflecting in discouragement and hopelessness of the youth regarding their future, their life projects and their personal goals, increasing the depreciation and feeling of incompetence and uselessness. We know that these feelings can shake the confidence of young people themselves and cause a drop in self-esteem.

According to André & LeLord (2000), the balance of self-esteem is based on three pillars, namely: the like

Table 1. Percentage frequency of positive and negative items of the scale of Rosenberg.

Positive indicators	% Brazil	% Portugal
Satisfaction with myself	77.9%	86.7%
I have good qualities	96.0%	95.7%
I am able	86.9%	85.7%
I value	81.9%	91.0%
Positive attitude can	81.8%	88.4%
Negative indicators	% Brazil	% Portugal
Not good at all	11.9%	32.8%
I do not have to be proud of	5.1%	24.3%
I feel useless	10.2%	27.5%
Have more consideration for me	17.0%	55.0%
I'm a loser	5.1%	15.3%

of himself, the image of self and self-confidence, because the young man who respects, listening to their needs and aspirations, regardless of what might happen, and who believe in their abilities and can make plans for the future, undoubtedly favor its self. In this direction, Assis, Avanci, Silva, Malachi, Santos, & Oliveira (2003) bring that self-esteem is linked to the sense of competence and value that the teenager assigns itself associated with the construction of the self.

In search of Monteiro, Azevedo, Sobreiro, & Constantino (2012)—which also applied the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in 60 Brazilian adolescents, an area of social risk, the state of Rio de Janeiro, found that 91.7% of surveyed are satisfied with himself says, a result that is superior to this research for both samples: 77.9% and 86.7% Brazil Portugal. Despite the students investigated possess more favorable conditions than the sample of their study, which shows up is that the adversities faced by the youth of Rio de Janeiro seem to favor the construction of a better self-esteem. As regards good qualities, 93.4% of adolescents at social risk have agreed that in this case the result is shown next, but lower than that found in this study, 96.0% of Brazilians and 95 students, 7% of Portuguese students, which suggests that this evaluation is independent of the context in which young people are more and assessing what each does to you.

Finally, regarding the negative aspects, the authors found that 60.0% of Rio's teenagers feel they have to be proud of; quite different from our results, as in the Brazilian sample only 5.1% agree with this statement and Portugal are 24.3%, confirming what was said about the self-esteem and its relationship with the skills and perspectives future.

As described by Morin (1999: 61):

We must understand that humans beings are unstable, in which no possibility of better and worse, having a better chance than others. We must also understand that beings have multiple personalities and potentials that everything depends on the events of accidents that occur and that they may release some of them.

Thus, it is believed that this research could also perceive these influences and possible differences between these two realities.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to verify the levels of self-esteem of adolescents, comparing the data with those of Portugal and Brazil. Results revealed that young people of both realities were surveyed with their positive self-esteem, although there was a statistically significant difference when comparing the samples, for the Brazilian who had higher self-esteem.

These results were in consonance with those obtained with a sample of Portuguese and Brazilian teachers, because the levels of motivation and wellbeing were higher in the Brazilian teachers (Jesus et al., 2011).

It is believed that cultural factors may be influencing this result and that the environment in which students are placed can contribute to building self-esteem that, from interpersonal relationships present in its social context, the evaluation of each under their experiences success or failure as well as the affective evaluation, this being the foundation for a more real/positive self-esteem.

It is noteworthy, too, that the contexts in which autonomy, free will and the interest of young people are at the base of his training as a fundamental process elements, seem to favor self-esteem, because when they are respected and included as the your goals, take responsibility for their choices (successes and failures), increasing the feeling of belonging, and thus grow more confident as citizens prepared to intervene in the world.

The data on issues related to sex/gender and self-image and self-esteem as well as other variables that may be influencing this construct, indicate that further research be conducted in order to elucidate mainly parents and educators to deal with relationships and advance effective interventions in a more positive perspective.

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