

Influence of sex and parents' parenting styles on religious and moral education students' self-esteem: A study in Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem Municipality, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Self-esteem is one of the psychological constructs that affect students' learning. Previous studies demonstrate that both personal and family factors influence students' self-esteem. Using the sociometer theory, this study was purposed to examine the effect of Religious and Moral Education (RME) students' sex and their parents' parental styles on their self-esteem. The study employed the cross-sectional survey research design of the quantitative research approach. The population was all 667 third-year RME students in basic schools in the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem municipality. Adopting the proportionate simple random sampling, 273 RME students were selected and participated in the study. A questionnaire with a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.82 was used as the data collection instrument. The solution Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 27 was used to analyze data. Independent sample t-tests and analysis of variance were used to analyze data to test the hypotheses. Results revealed that RME students have a high level of self-esteem. It was revealed that there is a statistically significant difference in RME students' self-esteem based on their sex. The results show no statistically significant effect of parental styles on the self-esteem of RME students. The findings highlight the enduring influence of gender-related socialization processes within the Ghanaian educational and cultural context. The findings offer vital insights into the complex interplay between family socialization and adolescent psychological development within the Ghanaian context. It was recommended that the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Ghana Education Service should develop and implement gender-sensitive (equity) teaching strategies to ensure all students, regardless of sex, feel valued and confident. Furthermore, RME teachers place a greater emphasis on the school environment and peer interactions to nurture student self-esteem. The school heads and heads of departments must encourage RME teachers to engage more actively with students to build a supportive and affirming classroom atmosphere.

Keywords: Parenting Style, Religious and Moral Education, Self-Esteem, Sex, Students

I. INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem is a critical psychological construct reflecting an individual's overall sense of self-worth or personal value. Self-esteem mirrors an individual's personal appraisals of their peculiar self-worth and capability (Donnellan et al., 2011; Orth & Robins, 2014). The concept was developed by Rosenberg (1989). Self-esteem is critical in understanding how individuals value themselves (self-worth). It is well explained by the Sociometer theory suggests that self-esteem is a psychological device of the notch to which individuals identify that they are appreciated and publicly accepted by others. This implies that self-esteem functions as an internal monitor of social acceptance and belonging (Leary, et al. 2007). In educational contexts, self-esteem significantly influences students' academic performance, social

interactions, and overall mental health. High self-esteem is associated with greater motivation, resilience in the face of challenges, and a positive attitude towards learning. Conversely, low self-esteem can lead to academic underachievement, social withdrawal, and increased vulnerability to stress and mental health issues (Mensah et al, 2024). The sex and family of the students play critical roles in determining their levels of self-esteem.

Research (Guszkowska et al, 2016) indicates that sex differences can influence self-esteem levels among students. Generally, studies have found that boys tend to report higher self-esteem than girls do, particularly during adolescence. This discrepancy can be attributed to various factors, including societal expectations, gender roles, and differences in socialization. For example, boys are often encouraged to be more assertive and independent, bolstering their self-esteem. Kim and Park (2015) found that the degree of self-esteem was higher for male students in comparison to the female students. Girls might face societal pressures related to appearance and conformity, which can negatively influence their self-esteem. Understanding these differences is essential in addressing the unique needs of male and female students to foster a supportive educational environment.

Parental styles, which can be categorised into authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved, play a crucial role in shaping children's self-esteem (Aremu et al., 2019). Authoritative parenting, characterised by warmth, responsiveness, and appropriate levels of autonomy granting, is generally linked to high self-esteem in children. Authoritarian parenting, which is strict and less emotionally supportive, can undermine self-esteem by fostering feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth. Permissive parenting, while emotionally supportive, may fail to provide the structure necessary for developing a strong sense of self. Uninvolved parenting, marked by neglect and lack of engagement, is often associated with the lowest levels of self-esteem in children (Baumrind, 1968; 1991).

Moreover, the parent-child relationship plays a crucial role in providing children with a safe and supportive base, which is essential for their emotional well-being and overall development (Garcia et al, 2019). Research categorizes parenting styles into authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved (Ashraf et al., 2019; Echedom et al., 2018; Khanum et al., 2023; Rudolphi et al., 2021). Interestingly while authoritative parenting is often linked to positive outcomes in children, (Khanum et al., 2023), authoritarian and permissive styles have been associated with less favourable outcomes, including elevated anxiety sensitivity (AS) and poorer dietary outcomes (Lopez et al., 2018; Timpano et al., 2015). Studies (Ashraf et al., 2019; Khanum et al., 2023; Liu, 2023; Lopez et al., 2018; Rudolphi et al., 2021; Sumargi et al., 2020) indicate that parenting styles have a significant impact on child development across cognitive, emotional, and social domains. These findings suggest the importance of considering parenting styles in interventions aimed at promoting healthy child development (Jones, 2022).

Authoritative parenting, characterised by warmth and structure, is consistently associated with positive outcomes in children's self-esteem (Indriyawati et al, 2023; Aremu et al., 2019; Hadjicharalambous et al, 2020; Szkody et al., 2020). Specifically, authoritative parenting correlates with higher self-esteem in students (Szkody et al., 2020). Additionally, paternal confidence in a child's autonomy is protective against depression, which is closely related to self-esteem (Morgan-Lopez & Patock-Peckham 2009). Contradictorily, Eskin (2012) found no significant correlation between parenting styles and psychological distress, which can be a proxy for self-esteem issues. This suggests that the effect of parenting styles on self-esteem may not be uniform across different contexts. Furthermore, gender differences in self-esteem have been observed, with boys generally reporting higher self-esteem than girls (Žukauskienė et al., 2011) do and these differences may interact with the effects of parenting styles.

Similarly, Zakeri and Karimpour (2011) identified "acceptance-involvement" and "psychological autonomy-granting" styles as significant positive predictors of self-esteem. Moreover, Aremu et al. (2019) reported a positive significant relationship between flexible parenting style and adolescent self-esteem, and Morgan-Lopez and Patock-Peckham (2009) highlighted that perceptions of paternal and maternal autonomy were associated with self-esteem in college students. Contradicting the initial claim, Moyano et al (2020) found a significant relationship between self-esteem and academic performance, suggesting that parenting styles do have some bearing on students' outcomes, which could extend to RME students. Furthermore, Huang et al. (2024) emphasized the negative impact of negative parenting styles on adolescents' self-esteem, indicating that different parenting styles indeed have varying effects on self-esteem.

Parental authoritativeness has been linked to positive outcomes such as higher hope and self-esteem, whereas authoritarianism is related to lower self-esteem (Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2008). Additionally, the impact of parental styles on self-esteem may be moderated by factors such as marital conflict and parental nurturance (Jalees et al, 2024). The influence of parental styles on self-esteem is also evident in the context of academic performance, as seen in undergraduate students (Adeyemi, 2020). However, there are contradictions in the literature, such as the differential impact of maternal and paternal behaviours on children's self-esteem (Jalees et al, 2024), and the varying effects of parental styles on the development of emotional intelligence (Nastas & Sala, 2012). Therefore, the claim that there is no statistically significant effect of parental styles on the self-esteem of RME students is not substantiated by the evidence provided in the papers (Aremu et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2024; Moyano et al., 2020; Zakeri & Karimpour, 2011).

Students can recognise religion as an important expression of human experience. They learn about and from the beliefs, values, practices, and traditions of various religions as well as develop respect for others and an understanding of beliefs different from their own. High self-esteem in RME facilitates the internalization of religious moral principles (Mensah et al, 2024). Self-esteem contributes to emotional resilience. Students with healthy self-worth are better equipped to handle stress, adversity, and moral dilemmas. In RME, students learn coping mechanisms rooted in faith. These mechanisms help them navigate challenges and maintain their self-esteem even during difficult times. Self-esteem encourages curiosity and openness. Students who value themselves are more likely to explore religious beliefs, rituals, and practices. As they learn about their faith, their self-esteem reinforces their sense of purpose and belonging within their religious community.

Self-esteem fosters a sense of connectedness. When students feel accepted and valued, their well-being improves. In RME, this connectedness extends to a sense of belonging to a larger spiritual family. Students find comfort in shared beliefs and supportive communities. A lack of structure can lead to insecurity and self-doubt. The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of RME students' sex and their parents' parental styles on their self-esteem. Understanding how these dynamics interplay within the context of RME is crucial for educators and parents. By tailoring their approaches to support the self-esteem of all students, regardless of sex, and considering the influence of different parenting styles, stakeholders can better foster an environment conducive to academic and personal growth.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The issue of self-esteem has received a lot of attention in educational research (Mensah et al, 2024). Self-esteem is widely recognized as a core dimension of personality development and a determinant of students' academic, social, and psychological functioning. It influences motivation, resilience, and the capacity to engage meaningfully with learning experiences (Hadjicharalambous et al, 2020; Szkody et al., 2020). Despite its importance, self-esteem does not develop in isolation; rather, it is shaped by a constellation of contextual and personal factors, among which sex and parental upbringing are particularly salient.

In several educational settings, including Ghanaian basic schools, students struggle with low self-esteem that manifests in poor classroom participation, examination anxiety, and vulnerability to peer pressure (Mensah & Ampem, 2023). Low self-esteem is a major contributing factor to students' lack of interest in RME despite it being a core subject. It is evident in the Chief Examiner's Report in 2024 that RME candidates' performance in BECE was not good enough. Since self-esteem is linked to students' outcomes, it begs the question 'Is this low performance due to low self-esteem of RME students? While parenting style and sex has been extensively linked to children's socio-emotional development in other subject areas in education, little is known about how RME students' sex and their parents parenting styles shape self-esteem outcomes in the Ghanaian context. This gap makes it difficult for educators, counsellors, and policymakers to design interventions that are sensitive to both gender differences and parental influences.

The existing literature (Aremu et al., 2019; Hadjicharalambous et al, 2020; Morgan-Lopez & Patock-Peckham 2009; Szkody et al., 2020; Zukauskienė et al., 2011) indicates that the self-esteem of adolescents is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including gender and parental styles. Every parent desire to raise an academically and socially fit child. This desire and demand vary as parents in their minds to raise disciplined and well-behaved children tend to show interest in their children's development. Amonoo (2014) argues that many parents in Ghana generally face some difficulties when choosing a particular school for their children. According to Saani and Amonoo (2021), these challenges arise because of the meaningful variations in the values parent's place on their children's education, educational beliefs, and perceptions. Donkor (2010), Nyarko (2011), and Chowa et al. (2013) confirm that there is a positive outcome when parents get involved in their children's education training as the learners become self-confident. Gender norms and societal expectations can influence how students perceive themselves (Mordeno et al, 2022). For instance, traditional gender roles may lead to different expectations for boys and girls. These expectations can affect self-esteem and self-worth. Mordeno et al (2022) said girls might face pressure to conform to feminine ideals related to appearance, behaviour, and academic achievement. If they fall short of these expectations, it can lead to feelings of inadequacy. Boys may experience pressure to exhibit masculinity, which can influence their self-esteem if they do not meet these standards. Bartoli, et al (2022) who worked on parental engagement in Ghanaian pre-primary schools suggested that it will be necessary for parents to engage their children's teachers regularly to know their learning behaviours. The various literature under discussion opines that there is a significant impact on parental involvement in children training in school. It will also be noted that almost all the studies looked at the school as a whole without paying much attention to the various subjects that students do in the course of their studies. There have been many studies (Donkor, 2010; Nyarko, 2011; Chowa et al, 2013) but none of them seem to have looked at the effect of RME students' sex and their parents' parental styles on their self-esteem. Studies that come close to the current study are Mensah et al (2024) who focused on the influence of parents parenting styles on senior high school students and not RME students in basic schools. Appiah (2022) also focused on the pedagogical knowledge of RME teachers without directly linking parenting styles to the self-esteem of RME students. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to narrow the gap in the

literature by examining the effect of RME students' sex and their parents' parental styles on their self-esteem in Elmina Metropolis. The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of RME students' sex and their parents' parental styles on their self-esteem.

1.2 Research Objective

- i. Establish differences in RME students' self-esteem based on their sex
- ii. Establish differences in RME students' self-esteem based on their parents' parenting styles

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study demands a theoretical foundation that relates parenting style, gender and self-esteem. Due to this, the Sociometer theory (Leary & Downs, 1995, Leary et al, 1995) was used. The Sociometer Theory (Leary & Downs, 1995, Leary et al, 1995), which is an offshoot of Rosenberg's (1989) self-esteem theory, is critical in understanding how individuals value themselves. Sociometer theory suggests that self-esteem is a psychological device of the notch to which individuals identify that they are appreciated and publicly accepted by others. This implies that self-esteem functions as an internal monitor of social acceptance and belonging (Leary et al, 2007). According to Leary et al (2007), there are five key clusters linked to the relational value that are categorised as those offering the greatest effect on an individual. They are: 1) macro-level, i.e., communities, 2) instrumental coalitions, i.e., teams, committees, 3) mating relationships, 4) kin relationships, and 5) friendships. The theory indicates that when individuals do things that look planned to defend or upsurge their self-esteem, the aim is generally to defend and boost their social worth and, thus, upsurge the probability of relational recognition. Therefore, a high self-esteem entails the belief that one is 'good enough' whereas low self-esteem is associated with self-rejection and a general lack of self-respect (Park & Park, 2019).

The sociometer theory has an extensive consequence for various fields of study, including education, social psychology, religious education etc. The theory provides a complete model and context for understanding the complex relationship between self-esteem and other social dynamics. It entrenches our comprehension of human social behaviour; it illuminates the role of self-esteem in relationships. In the context of this study, the theory is relevant to the study of RME students' self-esteem as it helps to understand the social-relational origins of self-worth.

The theory supports the view that parenting styles act as key sources of social approval or rejection which directly influences students' self-esteem (Szkody et al., 2020). The sociometer theory highlights the pivotal role of parental approval, warmth, and responsiveness in shaping self-esteem. Parenting styles that are supportive and communicative (e.g., authoritative) provide children with consistent signals of social acceptance, thereby enhancing their sense of worth and belonging (Indriyawati et al, 2023). Conversely, authoritarian parenting, marked by harsh discipline and low emotional responsiveness, or neglectful parenting, characterized by disengagement, may convey rejection or lack of value, which lowers the sociometer and undermines self-esteem. Permissive parenting, while high in warmth, may fail to provide adequate structure and guidance, which could send mixed signals about worth and expectations, potentially creating unstable self-esteem (Aremu et al., 2019; Hadjicharalambous et al, 2020). Thus, the sociometer theory provides a framework for understanding why RME students from different parental backgrounds may report varying levels of self-esteem.

The sociometer theory also offers insights into how sex may influence self-esteem outcomes. Cultural norms and gender role expectations often shape the type and extent of social approval that boys and girls receive from parents and society. For example, male students may be socially rewarded for confidence, assertiveness, and independence, leading to higher self-esteem when such traits are encouraged (Žukauskienė et al., 2011). Female students, however, may face more complex social pressures, where approval is tied to compliance, modesty, or relational harmony. When parents fail to provide balanced acceptance and encouragement, girls may interpret this as social devaluation, leading to lower self-esteem compared to boys (Morgan-Lopez & Patock-Peckham 2009). Therefore, from the sociometer perspective, differences in how boys and girls interpret parental behaviors and social signals may explain the moderating role of sex in the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem. Adopting this theory as a theoretical foundation for the understanding the self-esteem of RME students has not only helped us study a personality trait, but has enabled us situate self-esteem as a dynamic socially contingent construct that is shaped by both family context (parenting) and gendered social experiences.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Influence of sex on RME students' self-esteem

Self-esteem, broadly defined as one's evaluation of self-worth and value, is a crucial psychological construct that shapes students' academic engagement, social interactions, and overall wellbeing (Rosenberg, 1989; Mensah et al, 2024). Literature has established the critical role self-esteem plays in educational settings, specifically in students'

learning outcomes. In the context of this study, self-esteem helps to understand the RME students value themselves, since that can influence their learning outcomes. In this study, self-esteem is conceptualised as how RME students evaluate their self-worth. This relates to how they perceive themselves internally and how they perceive the value others place on them (Leary, et al 2007; Rosenberg, 1989; Mensah et al, 2024). Sex is used in this study to represent biological differences in students that categorises them into males and females. In this context, sex (biological male or female status) is used so that the students are categorised into distinct groups. This is because gender connotes a lot of categories which are not recognised in the Ghanaian cultural context. The literature is full of evidence on how sex influences self-esteem of individuals. Scholars like Kim and Park (2015) found that the degree of self-esteem was higher for male students in comparison to the female students. Bleidorn et al (2016) on sex differences in self-esteem, consistently found that there was significant relationship between sex and self-esteem. This gives indication that sex influences self-esteem. Others (Hadjicharalambous et al, 2020; Unis et al, 2015; Weber et al, 2024; Tegegne, 2022; Walsh, 1991; Finley, 2009; Chowdhury, 2010) have equally found statistically significant differences in self-esteem based on sex of respective respondents. However, a few studies (Enejoh et al, 2016; Anum et al, 2018) found that sex does not have an influence on self-esteem. In other words, these studies found no differences in the self-esteem of their participants based on their sex. There is the need to provide evidence to clear this contradiction although majority of the studies show sex influences self-esteem. We therefore posit that:

H1: RME students' sex significantly influences their self-esteem

2.2.2 Influence of Parenting Style on RME Students' Self-Esteem

Self-esteem has been widely recognized as a crucial psychological construct influencing academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and overall wellbeing (Rosenberg, 1989; Mensah et al, 2024). Among RME students, who are often engaged in moral reasoning, ethical decision-making, and spiritual identity development, self-esteem plays an especially important role in shaping attitudes towards self, others, and society (Leary et al, 2007; Rosenberg, 1989; Mensah et al, 2024). In this study, self-esteem is conceptualised as how RME students evaluate their self-worth. This relates to how they perceive themselves internally and how they perceive the value others place on them. Baumrind (1991) and Durbin et al. (1993) define parenting style as a set of routine activities, attitudes, and techniques affecting a child's warmth, responsiveness, and control levels. Baumrind (1968) classified parenting styles into authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian styles. Martin and Maccoby (1983) developed a different typology, which led to the development of four Parenting styles by combining high and low demands and warmth. In this study parenting style has been generally categorized into authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved, each with distinct levels of responsiveness and demandingness (Ashraf et al., 2019; Echedom et al., 2018; Khanum et al., 2023; Rudolphi et al., 2021). Previous studies (Ashraf et al., 2019; Khanum et al., 2023; Liu, 2023; Lopez et al., 2018; Rudolphi et al., 2021; Sumargi et al., 2020; Adeyemi, 2020; Amoah et al, 2018; Zakeri & Karimpour, 2011; Kou, 2022; Gul et al, 2024) have established that parenting styles influence self-esteem of individuals. So far, there seem to be no study that has established that parenting styles do not influence self-esteem of individuals. Based on this, we hypothesize that:

H2: Parenting styles of RME students' parents significantly influence their self-esteem.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Procedures

This study was underpinned by the positivist paradigm. The positivist paradigm is a philosophical approach to research that emphasizes the use of scientific methods to investigate social phenomena (Cohen et al, 2018). Creswell (2021) emphasises the importance of using quantitative methods within the positivist paradigm to ensure objectivity and the ability to generalise findings from a sample to a population. Applying the positivist paradigm to the study of how sex and parental styles affect the self-esteem of RME students involves a systematic, empirical investigation. The cross-sectional survey design was used to conduct this study. It enabled the collection of data from large sample of RME students with the aim to test hypotheses, measure variables numerically, and analyse data using statistical methods.

The population for the study was all 667 RME students in the third-year JHS in the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem Municipality. Form 3 students because it was revealed the students are being prepared to sit for the BECE and they are supposed to have good self-esteem. Again, they may now be conscious of their psychological strengths. The sample for the study was 273 out of 667. The researchers added a 10% level of precision (25) to the supposed sample size of 248 (Uakarn et al, 2021) selected from 10 schools. The students were selected with proportionate simple random sampling. It is a variant of simple random sampling where the sample is drawn so that the proportion of each subgroup in the sample is the same as the proportion of that subgroup in the entire population.

3.2 Measures

The instrument used to collect data to determine the influence of sex and parenting styles on RME students' self-esteem was a questionnaire. Questionnaires are structured according to guidelines and serve as a standardized means of collecting data (Babbie, 2021). The questionnaire had 14 items. Section A had three items that gathered information on students' sex, age, and the parenting style of their parents. Section B measured students' Self-esteem levels with 10 items adopted from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) developed by Rosenberg (1989). The variable was measured with a five-point Likert scale response; 5= strongly agree, 4= Agree, 3= Disagree, 2= Strongly disagree, 1=Uncertain.

3.3 Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The researchers reviewed the instruments under face and content validity with the assistance and direction of the peer reviewers and other experts in tool validation. The instruments were piloted with a RME students in Komenda, with 75 students to ascertain the tool's reliability. These students shared similar characteristics like students in Elmina. After pilot testing, the instrument was subjected to a test of internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha (α). Section B (self-esteem) which comprises 10 items had a reliability index of 0.82. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient is widely used as a reliable procedure to indicate how well various items are positively correlated with one another (Tsounis & Sarafis, 2018). Therefore, a measure of 0.7 Cronbach Alpha and above is acceptable reliability.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the RME students was first grouped for editing. The researchers checked to ensure that all the questionnaires were complete. All those incompletes were removed. After editing, they were coded using numerical values. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 27 was used to analyse data. Frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations (descriptive statistics) were used to organise and describe the responses. Mean differences measures (Independent samples T-test and ANOVA) were used to test the two hypotheses that were formulated to guide the study.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Results

In line with the testing of hypotheses, the variables (both independent and dependent) should be established. Results of the analysis of data collected showed the Sex and Parents' parenting styles of the RME students. Table 1 details the responses. The results show that most (55.3%) of the respondents were females. In addition, most (66.3%) of the students indicated that their parents use authoritative parenting style.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Students (n= 273)

Variable	Subscale	No.	%
Sex	Male	122	44.7
	Female	151	55.3
Parenting Styles	Permissive	27	9.9
	Authoritative	181	66.3
	Negligence	8	2.9
	Authoritarian	57	20.9

In order to test the hypotheses, the level of RME students' self-esteem (dependent variable) needed to be established. The students were to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the items based on the scale: "5=Strongly agree, 4=Agree, 3= Disagree, 2=Strongly Disagree, and 1=Uncertain. The mean scores and overall mean were interpreted as 1.00- 2.6 (low), 2.7- 3.4 (moderate) and 3.5-5.0 (high). Table 2 details the results.

Table 2*Level of RME Students' Self-Esteem (n= 273)*

Statement	U		SD/D		A/SA		M	SD
	No	%	No	%	No	%		
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	10	3.7	43	15.7	220	80.6	4.2	1.0
At times, I think I am damn good.	12	4.4	39	14.3	222	81.3	4.1	1.0
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	7	2.6	26	9.2	240	87.5	4.3	.9
I am able to do things as well as most other people.	9	3.3	41	15.1	223	81.8	4.1	1.0
I feel I do have much to be proud of.	11	4.0	66	24.2	196	71.8	4.0	1.1
I really feel useful at times.	4	1.5	41	15.0	228	83.8	4.2	1.0
I feel that I am a person of worth, or at least at equal plane with others.	13	4.8	45	16	215	78.8	4.1	1.1
I think I have enough respect for myself.	3	1.1	21	7.7	259	91.2	4.5	.8
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am not a failure.	1	.4	18	6.6	254	93.0	4.6	.7
I take a positive attitude towards myself.	9	3.3	10	3.7	254	93.1	4.5	.9
Average							4.3	0.95

Table 2 presents the results of students' response on the level of their self-esteem. Almost all (254, 93.0%) of them strongly agreed that all in all, they are inclined to feel that they are not a failure ($M = 4.6$, $SD = .7$). Again, they (254, 93.1%) of them agreed that they take a positive attitude towards themselves ($M = 4.5$, $SD = .9$) and think they have enough respect for themselves ($M = 4.5$, $SD = .8$). Majority (240, 87.5%) of them agreed that they feel that they have a number of good qualities ($M = 4.3$, $SD = .9$). More than half (228, 83.8%) of them agreed that they really feel useful at times ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 1.0$) and they are satisfied with themselves ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 1.0$). Majority ($n = 222$, 81.3%) of them agreed that they at times, they think they are damn good ($M = 4.1$, $SD = 1.0$), 215 (78.8%) of them think they feel that they are persons of worth, or at least at equal plane with others ($M = 4.1$, $SD = 1.1$), and are able to do things as well as most other people ($M = 4.1$, $SD = 1.0$). Finally, majority (196, 71.8%) of them also agreed that they feel they do have much to be proud of ($M = 4.0$, $SD = 1.1$).

4.2 Hypotheses Testing Results

H₀₁: There is no Statistically Significant Difference in RME Students' Self-Esteem Levels Based on their Sex

This hypothesis sought to find out whether there is any difference in RME students' self-esteem based on their sex. The literature suggests that the sex of one is generally associated with higher self-esteem in students. This difference is complex and may be influenced by cultural factors and specific student populations. To achieve this, an independent sample T-test was used to compare the means of the responses of male and female students on their self-esteem. The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested and was not violated ($\text{sig} = .344$), hence equal variances were assumed. Table 3 gives details of the results of the t-test.

The results indicate that the male students had a mean score of $M = 4.18$ ($SD = .448$, $n = 122$) and the females had a mean score of $M = 4.313$ ($SD = .420$, $n = 151$) indicating there is a slight difference in the means of both male and female students. There is a need to find out if the difference is statistically significant. The results, $t(271) = -2.505$, $p = .013$ further indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in RME students' self-esteem based on their sex.

Table 3*Independent Sample T-test on Differences in Students' Self-Esteem based on their Sex*

Variable	Sex	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig
Self-esteem	Male	122	4.182	.44777	-2.505	271	.013
	Female	151	4.313	.42017			

Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected. This shows that there is a difference between male and female RME students' self-esteem. Thus, male and female students have different appreciable levels of self-esteem. This study's finding corroborates with Durm et al. (1997) found a significant difference in self-esteem based on sex but not family type, indicating that gender can play a role in self-esteem. Zadanbeh and Zakerian (2011) also reported a significant difference in moral competence between male and female students, suggesting that gender differences may extend to other areas of personal development. Conversely, Elm et al. (2001) found no relationship between sex role orientation and moral reasoning level, although it did note that gender is related to moral reasoning, with women reasoning at higher levels than men. There is evidence from related research suggesting that gender differences do exist in areas such as self-esteem and moral competence. These findings imply that gender could potentially influence self-esteem levels among RME students, although further research would be required to confirm this within the specific context of RME education.

H₀₂: There is no Statistically Significant Effect of Parental Styles on the Self-Esteem of RME Students

This hypothesis was formulated to find out whether there is any effect of parental styles on the self-esteem of RME students. To achieve this, between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the mean difference between parental styles (permissive, authoritative, negligence and authoritarian) and the self-esteem of RME students. The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested and was not violated ($\text{sig} = .942$). Table 4 gives details of the results of the one-way ANOVA.

Table 4

ANOVA for the RME Students' Self-Esteem of Based on their Parents' Parenting Style

Variable	Group	N	M	SD	DT	F -value	P-value
Parenting styles	Permissive	27	4.23	.41			
	Authoritative	181	4.28	.45	3(269)	.435	.728
	Negligence	8	4.20	.44			
	Authoritarian	57	4.21	.42			

There is a need to find out if the difference is statistically significant. The results show that there was no statistically significant effect of parental styles on the self-esteem of RME students [$F(3, 2698) = .435, p = .728$]. Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

4.3 Discussion

The purpose of the study was to establish the effect of RME students' sex and their parents' parenting styles on their self-esteem. The results showed that RME students have a high level of self-esteem. The level of self-esteem among students, including those studying RME, is not directly addressed in previous studies (Al-Ariqi & Sharyan, 2022; Adekeye et al., 2016). However, several studies have investigated self-esteem in various student populations, which may offer insights into factors that could influence RME students' self-esteem. For instance, Al-Ariqi and Sharyan (2022) found that Yemeni EFL university students exhibited a high degree of self-esteem, and Barbin and Ninot (2008) reported an increase in global self-esteem and physical self-worth among adults with spinal cord injury participating in an adapted skiing program. Adekeye et al. (2016), while focusing on secondary school students' inclination towards terrorism, reported no gender difference in self-esteem levels among the students. Mensah et al (2024) also found high levels of self-esteem among senior high school students in Cape Coast. These findings suggest that self-esteem levels can vary based on educational context, personal experiences, and demographic factors. Contradicting the notion that self-esteem is static, Buckingham et al. (2012) found that self-esteem can moderate the impact of self-threats on contingencies of self-worth, indicating that self-esteem levels may be malleable and influenced by external factors. Additionally, Crocker (2002) support the idea that self-esteem can fluctuate in response to events that are relevant to one's self-worth contingencies.

Furthermore, the results revealed that there is a difference in the self-esteem levels of male and female RME students. Thus, male and female students have different appreciable levels of self-esteem. This study's finding corroborates with Durm et al. (1997) who found a significant difference in self-esteem based on sex indicating that gender can play a role in self-esteem. Zadanbeh and Zakerian (2011) also reported a significant difference in self-esteem between male and female students, suggesting that gender differences may extend to other areas of personal development. Conversely, Elm et al. (2001) found no relationship between sex role orientation and moral reasoning level, although it did note that gender is related to moral reasoning, with women reasoning at higher levels than men. There is evidence from related research suggesting that gender differences do exist in areas such as self-esteem and moral competence.

Finally, it was found that parenting styles of parents do not bring about differences in the self-esteem levels of RME students. Thus, the results show that a student's level of self-esteem will not be affected by a specific parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian, negligence and permissive) is been used. This finding deviates from studies (Aremu et al., 2019; Moghaddam et al., 2017; Zakeri & Karimpour, 2011) who found a broader relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem in various student populations. No wonder Huang et al., (2024) also found a significant relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem, with Moghaddam et al., (2017) and Zakeri and Karimpour (2011) revealing that authoritative and positive parenting styles are associated with higher self-esteem.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the results and discussions, it can be deduced that RME students are confident and self-assured due to the fact they see themselves as damn good, feel they have several good qualities, able to do things, feel they have much to be proud of, and feel useful at times. This suggests that the moral, spiritual and character-building orientations embedded within the RME curriculum may be contributing positively to students' sense of self-worth and personal identity. The finding provides a strong psychological foundation for academic engagement, positive peer relationship and resilience during developmental challenges.

The findings highlight the fact that sex is a factor that may be contributing to students lacking interest in learning RME and looking down on themselves. It also highlights the enduring influence of gender related socialization processes within the Ghanaian educational and cultural context. Although both boys and girls benefit from the moral, spiritual and ethical guidance embedded in RME, the observed variations in self-esteem suggests that gender norms, expectations, and lived experiences continue to shape students' perceptions of their own worth and capabilities. These differences may reflect broader societal patterns, such as differential encouragement, role modelling, or confidence building opportunities afforded to boys and girls which will seep into the classroom environment.

Finally, the findings offer vital insights into the complex interplay between family socialization and adolescent psychological development within the Ghanaian context. It suggests that, for students of RME, self-esteem may be shaped more strongly by factors beyond parental disciplinary approaches. School experiences, peer interactions, religious participations, community norms and the moral-spiritual formation provided through RME curriculum may collectively buffer or override variations in parenting styles. This implies that Ghanaian adolescents may draw self-worth from broader socio-cultural frameworks such as, communal support, shared values and religious identity, thereby reducing the degree to which specific parental behaviours directly translate into differences in self-esteem.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, it is RME teachers are encouraged to continue to employ teaching methods that reinforce positive self-image and self-worth among students. RME teachers should foster an environment where students can support each other, further boosting collective self-esteem. They should also implement regular check-ins and support systems to maintain high levels of self-esteem, addressing any issues that may arise promptly. RME teachers need to sustain and strengthen pedagogical approaches that affirm students' identities, encourage moral reasoning, and foster inclusive classroom environments.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NACCA) in Ghana, in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service (GES) should develop and implement gender-sensitive (equity) teaching strategies to ensure all students, regardless of sex, feel valued and confident. This would provide a balanced participation, affirming moral teachings that challenge gender stereotypes, and fostering inclusive classroom cultures, RME can help narrow self-esteem gaps between boys and girls. They should also encourage RME teachers to create focus groups to understand the specific needs and challenges faced by different genders in the learning environment. Provide teachers with training on gender differences in self-esteem and strategies to address them effectively.

Since parental styles are not a significant factor, school heads, heads of department and RME teachers place a greater emphasis on the school environment and peer interactions to nurture student self-esteem. The school heads and heads of departments must encourage RME teachers to engage more actively with students to build a supportive and affirming classroom atmosphere. Lastly, it is recommended that schools offer counselling services to address any individual student issues that may affect self-esteem, ensuring that each student feels supported and valued within the school setting. There is the need to consider the multifaceted ecological systems surrounding young learners. It highlights the potential of value-based education, particularly RME, to serve as a stabilising force that promotes a positive sense of self across diverse family backgrounds.

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