



## Self-Esteem and Creativity in Moroccan Primary Education: A Comparative study between State-run and Private School students of EL-Kelaa Des Sraghna as a case study

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### ABSTRACT

The current study investigates the relationships between self-esteem and creativity among primary school students in Morocco. In this study, three different schools, private and state-run, situated in urban and suburban areas have been investigated. A total of 85 students participated in this study. The students belong to the 6th grade and their ages range from 11 to 12 years. The students' self-esteem has been assessed using the widely used Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1989), whereas their creativity has been tested following Torrance test of Creative Thinking (1966; 1984). The teachers of these students were also interviewed about the issue in question. This research hypothesizes that students with high self-esteem are more likely to be creative than those with lower self-esteem. The study correlated results indicate significant relationships between self-esteem and students' creative performance. Students who live in urban areas have higher self-esteem than those who live and study in the suburbs. Also, students who study in private schools have higher self-esteem and thus better creative performance. The study also shows that high-self-esteem is, in most cases, associated with females and hence their creative performance is higher than their male counterparts.

**Keywords:** *Self-esteem; Creativity; Rosenberg self-esteem scale; Torrance test of creative thinking*

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### INTRODUCTION

This study is an attempt to find out the impact of self-esteem on primary school students' creativity. My reasons for choosing this topic are mainly academic. After reviewing a sum of literature related to the field of creativity and its relationship with self-esteem, studies about the effects of self-esteem on students' creativity are extremely scarce. However, self-esteem and creativity have been widely studied separately in the field of education. Empirical studies about self-esteem and creativity have been conducted in different countries. These studies have indicated that self-esteem can have a big influence on student's learning, thinking and behaviors. The role of creativity in developing the economy and culture of the nation is crucial. Some researchers have argued that by fostering children's creativity in the classroom, they will be able to identify and establish a framework for their lives (Annarella, 1999). The social consequences of this can result in an entrepreneurial culture which is important for societies to embrace change. The role of creativity in business and innovative organizations has widely been acknowledged although it is also acknowledged by some that culture shift in small companies is a significant challenge in fostering innovation and creativity in the economy (Vaux, et al., 1999).

Therefore, investigating the self-esteem-creativity phenomenon in Morocco is not only necessary for the sake of proving the fact that there is a significant correlation between the two variables, but also for the sake of determining the extent to which the quality of education is affected by these consequences.

In this study, we hypothesize that students with high self-esteem are more likely to be creative and those with low self-esteem. The higher self-esteem our students have, the more creative they are. When students are supported socially and psychologically, they build a higher self-confidence and their hence self-esteem improves. As a result, they start to believe in their potentials. They believe they can face challenges and solve their problems.

The main objective of this research is to find out the extent to which self-esteem and creativity are correlated: It aims at showing whether students with high self-esteem are more creative than students with low self-esteem. As such, this study shows the importance of self-esteem in education and its effects on student's creativity as well as the factors that affect students' self-esteem. We will also compare rural students' creative thinking to that of urban students and we will try to explore the extent to which gender differences have any effects on their creativity.

## **Research Questions**

This study endeavors to answer the following questions: what is creativity and what are its criteria? What makes some students less creative than others? Can this be attributed to their low self-esteem or is it an innate characteristic that is specific to every individual? What is the relationship between self-esteem and creativity? What impact does self-esteem have on creativity? Is self-esteem measurable? If so, how can we measure students' self-esteem? How important is self-esteem in education?

## **Theoretical Framework**

Various attempts have been made to include creativity in the school curriculum, especially in primary education. In the 1990s, creativity has particularly been linked to child-centered, discovery-based pedagogical approaches and arts. However, it was this 'free' approach to creativity which constituted part of the critique of child-centered education practices by the Black Paper writers (Cox & Dyson, 1971) and which, arguably, lubricated the way for the introduction of a subject-content-based national curriculum at the end of the 1980s. Moreover, a number of schools were incompetently implementing the ideas of the Plowden report, which had been published in England in 1967, (Alexander, 1995). Yet, since the mid-1990s, children's creativity has started to attract policy-makers' attention which led to a growing recognition in the field of education to develop nations' economy and culture.

## **Self-esteem and education**

Self-esteem is one of the major factors of human personality that determines an individual's behavior. Self-esteem has been the center of research in a variety of disciplines, such as education, sociology, and psychology. It has been studied and explored in various ways.

Individual background variables such as gender, race, and social class have been shown to play important roles in determining trajectories of adolescent self-esteem (DuBois et al., 2002). For example, although early studies suggested that African-American and ethnic minority adolescents suffered from steeper declines in self-image relative to European Americans, more recent work indicates that the self-esteem of African-American adolescents is comparable to or even higher than that of European-American peers (Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Designing a solid research plan is not simply a matter of opting for eclectic research approaches. Choosing the latter, which includes quantitative and qualitative approaches, must not take place without answering the following question: do these different approaches represent simply another way to investigate questions or do they represent two different perspectives on the realities under investigation? (Seliger et al, 1989). In view of the complexity of Self-esteem and its impact on creativity, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed in this study. The former was implemented using Torrance tests of creative thinking, whereas the latter includes interviews and classroom observation. This process of triangulation is not only obtained to ensure the validity and credibility of the obtained data, but it is in the belief of the researcher that there will be a fundamental difference between the truths obtained from quantitative data and those obtained from qualitative data.

Therefore, the methodology undertaken here is primarily of a quantitative dimension in that the researcher is doing a descriptive, comparative, correlational and casual study. However, a human touch is added by conducting several interviews asking teachers about the issue.

Since the study seeks to explore the correlation between self-esteem and creativity, two different tests have been prepared. The first is meant to test student's self-esteem and the second is meant to test students' creativity. As far as self-esteem is concerned, we have decided to visit three different schools to test different students from both public and private education whose students belong to both rural and urban areas.

## **Rosenberg's self-Esteem Scale**

Self-esteem can be tested using a variety of models. However, studies have shown that Rosenberg's self-esteem scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1989) is the most valid and reliable scale which makes it one of the most widely used measures of self-esteem (Sinclair et al., 2010). Rosenberg's self-esteem scale is a ten-item scale that measures global self-esteem considering both positive and negative feelings about the self. It is unidimensional in that all the questions are answered using a four-point Likert scale format that ranges from "strongly agree" to 'strongly disagree" (Alexander, R, 1995).

Rosenberg's Self-Esteem is one of the most reliable and valid scales. It is widely used in human sciences, psychology and many other disciplines. The primary reason why it is adopted in this study is that it was translated into Arabic and validated. It was already used to assess student's self-esteem and the Academic Self-Efficacy among a sample of 255 college students in the United Arab Emirate (Afari, 2012). One of the major objectives of the study was to test the validity of this scale. The Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale and the Academic self-efficacy. The results have showed satisfactorily validity, internal consistency and reliability.

The creativity test and the self-esteem test are joined together. Therefore, each student is supposed to complete the two tasks.

**Data Analysis**

In this section, we will first analyze students’ self-esteem and then analyze student’s tests of creativity. We will then compare the performance of the private school students to that of public schools’ students in urban areas. Then we will compare each of these with that of students who live in rural areas. We will also compare the teachers’ responses. Finally, we will draw connections between self-esteem and creativity and provide possible solutions to solve the problem. If, for example, self-esteem is attributed to the rigid school systems that result in lower scores and achievements for the same effort which prevent from developing their creativity, we can redeem it in the form of a good score that would inspire students to have higher self-esteem and hence develop their creativity. Later, we will compare the degree of creativity among students of rural, urban areas, public and private schools.

To begin with, let’s first understand how self-esteem is calculated on Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale:

**Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale**

Scores are calculated as follows:

- *Items 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7 add the score :*

Strongly agree = 3
Agree = 2
Disagree = 1
Strongly disagree = 0

- *Items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 reverse the score:*

Strongly agree = 0
Agree = 1
Disagree = 2
Strongly disagree = 3

The scale ranges from 0-30. Scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range; scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem.

A total of 85 students completed this measure, which is the same number of the students who completed the creativity tests. This means that none of the students administered left the test unanswered. Respondents indicated the degree to which they agreed with each item using a 4-point rating scale, higher scores indicating high self-esteem, lower scores indicating low self-esteem.

**Suburban, state-run school students’ self-esteem scores**

The following table shows the scores of the students tested by number and gender:

Table 1: Suburban, state-run school students’ self-esteem scores

Scores	Males	Females
Below 15	1	0
From 15 to 20	10	10
From 21 to 25	2	2
Above 25	0	0

As table 1 shows, only one person of the students tested scored below five. The majority of the students’ scores range from 15 to 20, which is according to Rosenberg’s measure self-esteem. None of the students scored above 25.

**Urban state-run school students’ self-esteem scores**

Table 2: Urban state-run school students’ self-esteem scores

Scores	Males	Females
Below 15	1	0
From 15 to 20	6	8
From 21 to 25	9	6
Above 25	0	0

Table 2 shows that all the students’ scores range between 15 and 25 except for one male student whose score is lower than 15. As the table shows, no students from this school scored above 25. Females’ self-esteem is almost equal to that of males.

**Private school students' self-esteem scores**

Table3: Private Students' self-esteem scores by number.

Scores	Males	Females
Below 15	0	0
From 15 to 20	4	3
From 21 to 25	10	8
Above 25	0	5

Table 3 shows that the vast majority of the students' scores range from 21 to 25. None of the private school students scored below 15, 7 of them scored between 15 and 20, and 5 of them have scored above 25. That is, 71% of the students have a high self-esteem. Below is the graphic representation of this data.

All in all, the private school class has the highest self-esteem, and then comes next the state-funded urban class. The class with the lowest score is the public sub-urban class. But since the purpose of this study is to draw correlations between self-esteem and creativity, the next section will investigate the creative performance of the same students following Torrance tests of creativity for primary school students.

**Torrance tests of creativity for primary school students**

The tests used are meant for primary school students and they target a set of creative skills. Assessing the creative production of the students takes into consideration the following criteria:

- Students' imaginative skills
- Students' creative skills
- Problem-solving skills
- The quality of their creative production (authenticity and innovation)

The creativity skills of students were analyzed in terms of their creative production, implementation, designing, holistic patterns, and originality which is one of the creativity parameters of Torrance (1962).

**Suburban-school students' creative performance**

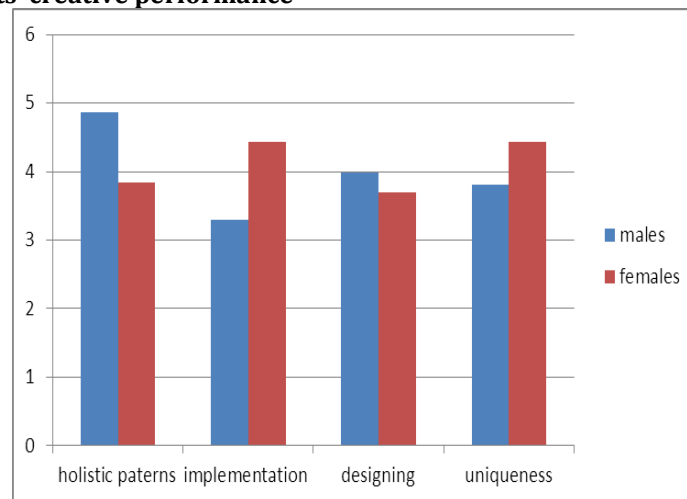


Figure 1: Suburban-school students' creative performance

Figure 1 shows that the creative performance of the suburban students is higher in terms of its holistic patterns but lower when it comes to designing. That's probably due to the lack of the educational tools that are necessary for a good creative production. However, females show a good performance especially in the originality and uniqueness of their creative works. As a result, we can deduce that suburban females proved to be more creative than their male counterparts. But what is noticeable about this class, as far as females are concerned, is that the creative performance's originality is relatively higher than its holistic patterns and designing while it is lower than implementation. On the other hand, males' creative production is less original but looks better in its holistic patterns. This is to say that although females have more unique creative production, they seem to lack the skills as well as the school tools as to how to make it look neat and clean; males, however, seems to have problem with problem solving. This is probably the reason why their creativity is less unique.

**State-run, urban School student's creative performance**

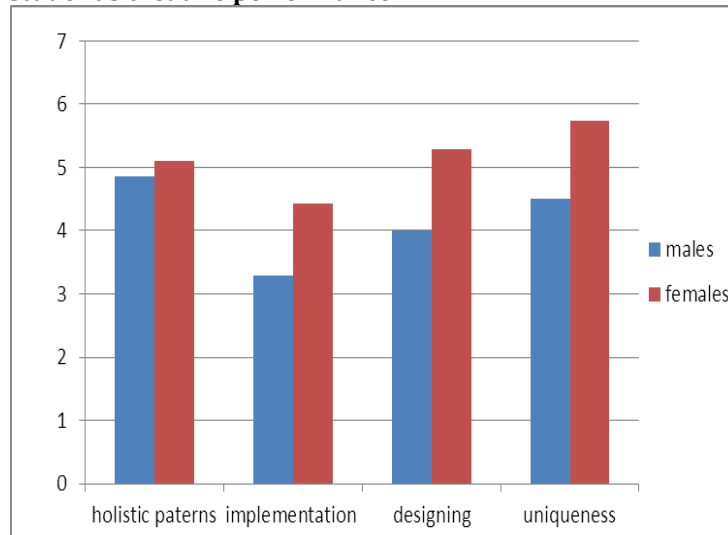


Figure 2: State-run, urban School student's creative performance

Figure 2 shows that state-run, urban school students show a higher performance than that of their suburban counterparts in terms of holistic patterns, designing and uniqueness. Females show better performance in comparison with males. As the graph shows, the blue bars representing males are remarkably lower than the bars representing females. The most noticeable thing about this class is that females have a more original production, whereas males seem to have difficulty with problem solving. This is made obvious in their low scores concerning implementation. To conclude, although their self-esteem scores are mostly equal, the creative production differences are highly remarkable.

**Private school students' creative performance**

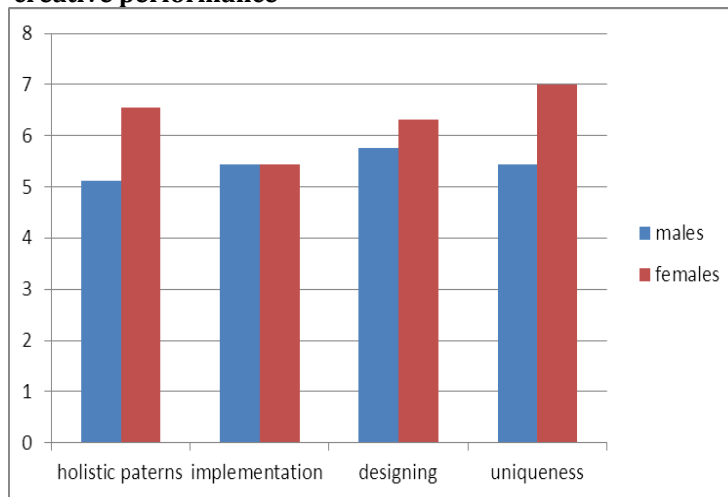


Figure 3: private school students' creative performance

Figure 3 is a graphic representation of the creative performance of the private school students. It shows that these students have scored better than the two previous classes in terms of holistic patterns, implementation, designing and uniqueness. But once again, females score better than their male counterparts. To sum up, the private school class has the highest self-esteem and the best creative performance.

**INTERVIEWS**

Here are the set of questions given to the teachers of the students in every school.

- How important is creativity in your school?
- Does the textbook you are using boost, in a way or another, the creativity of your students?
- Do parents come to check on their kids regularly at school? Why?
- How do you evaluate your students' self-esteem?
- How are their socio-economic conditions?
- What is the average grade of the class?

**The suburban school teacher's answers:**

Below are answers as they were uttered by the teacher translated into English:

1. For me it is important. From time to time, I give my students challenging tasks that can boost their creativity.
2. The textbook itself does not actually boost creativity. There only a few lessons at the end of every unit which most of the primary school teachers take for granted.
3. No, they mostly don't. They do, but only when a student is asked to bring his father.
4. I think their self-esteem is generally normal, although there are some students who are not self-confident enough.
5. Most of them have good socio-economic conditions.
6. The average grade of the class is 6.01.

**The State-run, urban school teacher's answers:**

- It is important but teachers usually follow textbooks.
- The textbook we are using does not boost creativity unfortunately.
- Yes, they come to take their students from the school. Some of them come to check on their kids' progress.
- Their self-esteem varies from a student to another.
- There are some students who have socio-economic problems
- The average grade of the class is 6.12.

**The private school teacher's answers**

- Yes, it is very important. The school organize extra-curricular activities such as competitions in which students show their creative skills
- There are many creativity-based tasks in the textbooks we are adopting here.
- Yes, their parents visit them almost every day. They come to check on their students.
- Most of the students have high self-esteem.
- All the students have good socio-economic conditions.
- The average grade of the class is 8.71.

According to the teachers' answers, we can conclude that the two state-run schools don't take creativity seriously. It is not as reinforced as in private schools. As for students' self-esteem, we can deduce that it is attributed to several factors, such as parents' carelessness about their students. As the answers suggests, the private school students, who are looked after and checked upon at school by their parents, have higher self-esteem than their counterpart state-run school students.

The state-run, school students' low self-esteem can also be explained in terms of the students' socio-economic conditions. The private school students, according to the data we have elicited from the students and the teachers above, have higher social status and better socio-economic conditions in comparison with the state-run school students. Also, the urban students, from both sectors, have higher scores than the suburban kids. This is to say that these low scores can also be attributed to the poor socio-economic conditions.

The grades factor or the grading system can also affect students' self-esteem and hence their creativity. As shown above, the private school class, which has the highest self-esteem and the best creative performance, has the highest grade average. This thus suggests that the low self-esteem can be resulted or rather affected by the low scores, which might be the result of the hard-grading systems on the part of teachers.

It becomes, therefore, obvious that the private school students, as has been empirically proved earlier, have higher-self-esteem than students who study in state-funded schools in Moroccan education. Also, students who study in the suburban schools have lower self-esteem than the students belonging to the two other schools. This is the reason why they have the lowest creative performance.

**CONCLUSION**

By and large, the current study has proved that there is a significant correlation between self-esteem and creativity. As the figures below indicate, there are remarkable differences of the self-esteem and creativity performance among the three schools. The urban schools have higher self-esteem in comparison with the suburban schools. Concerning their creativity, the urban school students seem to be more creative than the students of the suburbs. It is important to mention that the private school students scored better than the two schools in terms of both creativity and self-esteem. It is also worth-mentioning that females in all the three schools tend to be more creative than males. They also have scored better in their self-esteem. Therefore, most logical conclusion to be made here is that, as was hypothesized, students who have high self-esteem are more likely to be creative.

### **Findings and further investigations**

An empirical study is conducted in three different schools: state-run and private primary schools. The schools are situated in urban and sub-urban areas in EL-Kalaa des Sraghna, Morocco. The objective of the study is to explore the effects of self-esteem on creativity. Taking into consideration all the graphic representations that we have dealt with, we can deduce that private school students of Kalaa des Sraghna have the highest self-esteem in comparison to the other schools. Also their creative performance is higher than that of the state-run school students. The suburban, state-funded school students have the lowest self-esteem and the least creative production. The urban state-run school students are relatively more creative than those of the suburbs. Their self-esteem is also relatively higher than that of the Suburban students. Therefore, the most logical explanation to this phenomenon is that students who have higher self-esteem are more likely to be creative than students with low self-esteem. However, it should be noted that according to Rosenberg's measurement criteria, scores ranging from 15 and 25 are within normal and only those above 25 are to be considered high. The vast majority of the students' self-esteem scores are below 25 and above 15. Only a few students from both run-state urban and suburban students scored below 15. This suggests that the overwhelming majority of Kalaa des Sraghna students, be they urban, suburban, state-run or private school students, have a normal self-esteem that ranges between 15 and 25. However, it's worth-mentioning that there is a great gap between the three tested schools with respect to their self-esteem and creativity. For example, the sub-urban students' self-esteem scores do not usually exceed 20, whereas the urban students, though they also study in a state-run institution, have a higher self-esteem and hence a more creative power than those of the suburbs.

What is intriguing about this study, however, is that there is a great gap between the Omar Ibnu Elkhattab school and Elbochra school despite their closeness in terms of geography and cultural background. The only way to explain this is by looking at the student's socio-economic conditions. Most of the private school students' parents have good jobs. 98 percent of the students' both parents are either state employees or have high positions. On the contrary, only 30 percent of the students belonging to the state-urban school are state-employees. 100 percent of the suburban students' fathers are farmers, with little limited literacy skills.

All the three schools show that females' self-esteem is higher than that of their male counterparts. And again, females' creative performance is higher than that of males. This also suggests that students' creativity is high only if their self-esteem is also high.

However, it is worth-mentioning that there are other obstacles that, apart from self-esteem, impede students' creativity. This comes as a direct observation of the researcher while conducting this study. For example, in the suburban school students don't have the basic tools to even write their lessons let alone to be creative. It is usual in the suburban schools for students to borrow a pen or a pencil from another student in another class. It would be of no surprise also if you find no pencil at all in the whole class. In such cases, rarely can you find a rural student endowed with all the necessities of a good education. On the contrary, the private school students are endowed with all they need, high quality pencils, multiple colors, extra-white sheets, copybooks.

To conclude, this research has proved that self-esteem has a great influence on creativity in Moroccan primary schools. The higher self-esteem is the more creative the student is. However, it has yielded yet more complex questions: As we have seen, females, both in the private sector and public sector, both in urban and suburban areas, showed that their creative performance as well as self-esteem is higher than those of their male counterparts? The problematic issue that is worthy of investigation here is: why is females' self-esteem higher than that of males?

### **General conclusion**

This study investigates the role of self-esteem on creativity among primary school students in Morocco. In fact, creativity and self-esteem are two important concepts in education. It has been shown that research in the last decades has paid an increasing attention to these concepts in an attempt to improve learning and education.

As noted above, creativity has become, and indeed should become, an important part of education. It is so important not only for nations' economy but also for modern citizens to improve their life at the educational and professional levels. Yet it is considered one of the most challenging goals to realize for a variety of factors. This can either be attributed to the educational policy of the state if it does not support or value creativity in any way. Doubtless, no education system will be successful if it does not support creativity.

Despite the fact that previous research does actually have a lot to say about the relationship between creativity and variables, such as thinking styles, leadership, and other emotional aspects, little have been said about the relationship between self-esteem and creativity.

Undoubtedly, research has empirically shown that self-esteem has an important existence in human personality, particularly in children's personality (a case in point here is early-adolescence children). Self-esteem proves to be of crucial importance to learning as it is an essential part of human personality. Researchers have studied Self-esteem extensively and come up with precise classifications: high self-esteem and low self-esteem. To do this, they have

adopted different scales to measure Self-esteem. The most influential one is that proposed by Rosenberg which is used in this research. At the outset of this research, it is hypothesized that students with high self-esteem are more likely to be creative than those with low self-esteem. In fact, this was first grounded in the researcher's personal experience; while some argue that there is no relationship between self-esteem and creativity, conducting a research paper of this kind is important to find out the extent to which these two variables are correlated. This research, however, has proved that there is a significant correlation between the two variables: students who have high self-esteem have been found to be more creative than students with low self-esteem. Moreover, this study has found yet more surprising facts, one of which is the fact that students who study in the private sector in Morocco tend to be more creative than those in the state-funded school although these students live in the same environment and have the same culture. The research suggested that this is mainly because the private school students have higher self-esteem. The study shows that rural students have the weakest creative production partly because they have the lowest self-esteem. The most intriguing fact this research shows, however, is that females, both rural and urban, are more creative than their male counterparts. This is suggested above for further investigations as it is beyond the scope of this research.

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