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SELECTED PREDICTORS OF YOUTH'S SELF-ESTEEM RELATED TO THE EXECUTIVE ASPECTS OF THE SELF*

Introduction: The executive aspects of the Self, as a system responsible for self-control, behavior regulation and effective achievement of goals, may serve as predictors of self-esteem, because the effectiveness of self-regulatory processes fosters the experience of efficacy, competence and congruence between behavior and internal standards, which in turn strengthens global self-evaluation.

Research Aim: The aim of the study was to determine the relationships between youth self-esteem and selected psychological resources and such dispositions that determine the executive aspects of the Self as: basic hope, personal competence, coping strategies, and social adjustment.

Method: The study included 590 pupils of Youth Educational Centres and Youth Sociotherapy Centres, and pupils of secondary schools aged 13-18.

Results: Conducted analyses show the predictive role of personal competence (the dimension of strength), coping (active, emotion-focused, and coping humor), basic hope (the dimension of belief in the benevolence of the world), and social adaptation in shaping the self-esteem of young people.

Conclusions: The research provides important data on the mechanisms of self-image development during adolescence. The conclusions can be used to construct preventive programs and educational, rehabilitation, and therapeutic impacts in the field of making young people's self-esteem more positive and realistic.

Keywords: self-esteem, youth, personal competence, coping, basic hope, social adaptation

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I adopt Rosenberg's (1965, 1989) understanding of self-esteem as a positive or negative attitude to and the global assessment of the self. High self-es-

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teem is the belief that one is a 'good enough' and worthy human being, without feeling superior to others. Low self-esteem involves dissatisfaction with and rejection of the self (Rosenberg, 1965, pp. 30–31). Self-esteem is a subjective construct by nature, and it is based on individuals' own perception and evaluation of their worth (Anastazi & Urbina, 1999; Baumeister et al., 2003). As such, self-esteem contains an emotional component (feelings related to the object that is one's own self) and a cognitive component, which comprise cognitive self-judgments (Łaguna et al., 2007, p. 165). On this take, self-esteem is an element of self-concept and represents a tolerably stable feature that reflects individuals' current state or is a motive prompting them to act in a certain way (self-regulation), in line with their needs and potentially supporting their development.

Self-esteem is highly relevant to people's functioning in a broad array of spheres (Łaguna et al., 2007). It protects individuals against negative experiences, helps them maintain mental health, and contributes to adaptive behaviour in social contexts (Mann et al., 2004). It also determines people's relations with others (while also being shaped by the feedback from these relations) and formatively affects the ways individuals act, particularly in unknown, challenging, and anxious situations (Szpitalak & Polczyk, 2015, pp. 33–37; Wojciszke, 2015, p. 192). Overall, the level of self-esteem (low vs. high) and its adequacy (lowered vs. excessive), along with the congruence and persistence of self-image, determine individuals' attitude to the self, the world, and their own activity (Wysocka & Ostafińska-Molik, 2016). At the same time, the 'self' and its components, outcomes of one's activity, and responses from others influence one's self-esteem (Szpitalak & Polczyk, 2015).

Executive aspects of the Self play a special role in the process of shaping the global self-esteem of the individual. In Baumeister's (1998) theory, the self's executive functions, which encompass self-regulation, impulse control, emotional regulation, decision-making, and goal pursuit, form a key mechanism that influences the level of self-esteem. In the author's view, self-esteem is largely based on the assessment of one's self-efficacy in the regulation of behaviour according to one's norms and goals. Effective self-control helps accomplish desired results, sustain social relations, and keep action in line with values, which provides positive feedback and reinforces self-esteem. For their part, executive deficits cause impulsiveness, failure, and distorted emotional regulation, all of which produce a lowered evaluation of personal competence, self-efficacy and, consequently, self-esteem (Baumeister et al., 2007). Baumeister also states that a temporary exhaustion of self-regulation resources (i.e., ego depletion) may reduce self-esteem for a time through lowering the quality of action (Baumeister et al., 1998; Baumeister, 2002; Evans et al., 2016). Thus, the self's executive functions serve as important predictors of self-esteem as they determine both individuals' achievement and their capacity to maintain a coherent and positive self-image (Lachowicz-Tabaczek & Śniecińska, 2008). The efficiency of this system becomes partic-

ularly important during adolescence, when self-image is intensively reorganized as a result of dynamic identity transformations, increasing importance of peer relationships, greater sensitivity to social evaluation, or dynamic development of self-regulatory mechanisms (Erikson, 1968). Effectiveness of the executive aspects of the self is conducive to the experience of agency, competence, and social acceptance, on the basis of which the individual constructs and updates the assessment of their own value.

Self-esteem and Executive Aspects of the Self: Theory and Research

Paradoxically perhaps, while self-esteem has long been a very popular object of both theoretical study and empirical research, the very term 'self-esteem' has not been unambiguously defined yet (Brown & Marshall, 2001; Mruk, 2013; Szpitalak & Polczyk, 2015). Identifying sources of self-esteem and establishing how internal and external factors impact it have been similarly elusive. This may result from the fact that many of these factors are reciprocally influential, forming a feedback loop, and any model that explains self-esteem must consider multiple moderators (Brown et al., 2001; Wysocka & Ostafińska-Molik, 2016).

Sources of self-esteem are supposed to be biological (Neiss et al., 2005) and psychological, with the latter divided into motivational, cognitive, and social factors (Lachowicz-Tabaczek & Śniecińska, 2009). These include self-judgments which are formed on the basis of experiences that may cause the subject's positive or negative self-evaluations, such as the past experience of success and/or failure, comparison of aspirations and actual achievements, (in)effective goal pursuit and emotional arousal. All this determines the individual's engagement in action (Góralewska-Słońska, 2011). Self-esteem may also derive from (significant) others' opinions, the quality of one's relations with parents and peers (Kernic, 2005), comparisons of one's performance with that of others, and one's socio-economic status (Gałat, 2024). Besides, the major psychological sources of self-esteem include: (1) a positive attributional style expressed in positive, albeit not necessarily objectively warranted, attitudes to the self and others (high benevolence); (2) significant objective accomplishments that 'legitimise' the subject's development of high self-esteem (high merit); and (3) a generalised positive self-image which results from both conscious and unconscious 'favourable' distortions (self-positivity bias; see Kwan et al., 2009). Thus, the general factors in self-esteem fall into two major groups: internal indicators associated with how individuals think of themselves based on their own experiences and external indicators bound up with the opinions of and relations with others (Styk & Sidor, 2024). Basing self-esteem on internal vs. external sources depends, among other things, on the efficiency of the executive aspects of the self. Research indicates that the greater the self-regulatory effectiveness, the more self-esteem is anchored in the Self and the less dependent it is on social variables (Kernis, 2003).

While self-esteem is known to determine the ways in which people regulate their behaviour, it is not exactly clear how it is associated with social functioning. Rosenberg's (1965) early research implied that high self-esteem related to considerable popularity in the group. However, this finding was contradicted by Bishop and Inderbitzen (1995), whose research found people with both high and low self-esteem to be equally liked by their peers. Similar conclusions were suggested by a study of teachers' opinions on the popularity of children in their classrooms (Adams et al., 2000). The study showed that children's self-esteem was not correlated with their popularity in the peer group as assessed by their teachers. More than that, research has also revealed that under conditions of ego threat, individuals with high self-esteem are liked much less than those with low self-esteem likely because they tend to exhibit angry and aggressive responses to such situations (Campbell & Fehr, 1990). Findings on self-perceptions of people with different levels of self-esteem are more unambiguous. Namely, individuals with high self-esteem perceive themselves as more socially attractive and better liked (Battistich et al., 1993), whereas those with low self-esteem report having more negative experiences in contact with others (Lakey et al., 1994).

So far, research on links between socially maladapted people's self-esteem and their functioning has yielded a similarly unclear picture. Researchers tend to conclude that maladapted youth exhibit a greater incongruence between the 'real self' on the one hand and the 'ideal self' and 'ought-self' on the other, as well as having a more negative self-image, than well-adapted youngsters, which suggests that there is a simple correlation between self-esteem and adaptation (Siemionow, 2011, p. 56). However, more recent studies, which differentiate socially maladapted individuals in a more detailed way, indicate a curvilinear relationship between the two variables, which means that both high and low self-esteem may be correlated with maladaptation, depending on specific individual traits, and that average self-esteem levels are associated with individuals' good adaptation (Siemionow, 2011, p. 57). Besides, factors such as the type and phase of social maladaptation have been found to be moderators of this relationship (Wysocka & Ostafińska-Molik, 2014).

The latest data do not substantiate any straightforward relationship between self-esteem levels and task performance (Baumeister et al., 2003). Analogously to social behaviour, the initial assumption in this respect was that high self-esteem determined a considerable effectiveness of task performance (Wylie, 1979), but this notion was overthrown by research showing that self-esteem was not a predictor of success but, the other way round, that success led to high self-esteem and also bred happiness, irrespective of self-esteem (Bachman & O'Malley, 1986; Wigfield i in., 1991). Similarly, failure has been revealed to predict low self-esteem and lack of happiness (Baumeister et al., 2003). Research also suggests that individuals with high self-esteem are more perseverant than those with low-esteem and that they engage in more (and more varied), often risky pursuits (Baumeister et al., 1996).

This relates to their belief in self-efficacy and internal locus of control (Judge et al., 2002), which are variables responsible for heightened persistence and activity. Besides, individuals with high self-esteem more frequently use adaptive, task-oriented coping in stressful situations and are less likely to rely on less adaptive styles, which focus on emotions or avoidance (Fecenec, 2008). Numerous studies (Lachowicz-Tabaczek & Śniecińska, 2006; Łaguna 2006a, 2006b) have corroborated the notion that self-esteem is strongly related to dispositions that reflect the executive aspects of the self, such as control, agency, and optimism. Baumeister et al.'s (2007) theory holds that the self's executive functions are among the major predictors of self-esteem because they influence individuals' self-evaluation regarding the effectiveness of action, self-control, and the realisation of norms, values, and goals. In the concept of the executive aspects of the Self, their regulatory function is emphasized, including intentional behaviour management, impulse control, and the realization of goals according to personal standards (Baumeister et al., 2007). The system of executive aspects of the Self is complex and includes many different constructs, among which the following deserve special attention: basic hope, personal competence, adaptive coping strategies, and the level of social adaptation. Together, these resources can be considered as disposable components of the executive system of the self, since they organize, sustain, and modulate goal-oriented activities, thus fostering positive social adaptation young people.

In this approach, basic hope is a cognitive regulatory scheme that organizes expectations towards the world and one's own effectiveness and strengthens perseverance in action (Trzebiński & Zięba, 2003). Personal competence reflects the belief in one's own agency and ability to act effectively, which directly determines the effectiveness of self-regulation (Bandura, 1997). Coping styles are operational executive mechanisms that enable regulation of emotions and behaviour in stressful situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Social adaptation, on the other hand, reflects the effectiveness of behaviour regulation in the context of social norms and requirements, being an indicator of adaptive behaviour control (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

Together, these constructs form the core of the self-executive system and can be important predictors of self-esteem, as they condition the quality of agency experiences, effectiveness, and compliance of action with personal standards. Belief in one's own competence and effectiveness is conducive to a positive interpretation of the results of action, which strengthens the global assessment of oneself. Similarly, adaptive coping strategies, which enable effective regulation of emotions and behaviour in stressful situations, reduce the risk of experiences of failure and helplessness that could lower self-esteem. Basic beliefs about meaningfulness and benevolence of the world organize cognitive interpretations of experiences and influence stability and direction of self-esteem. Finally, the level of social adaptation, which reflects the effectiveness of behavioural regulation in the context of social

norms, provides crucial feedback in interpersonal relationships, which are one of the main sources of self-esteem. Efficiency of the executive aspects of the self can be prognostic of the level of self-esteem, especially during adolescence. Effective self-regulation fosters accumulation of experiences of success, competence, and social acceptance, which are the basis for positive global self-esteem. Theoretically, therefore, it can be assumed that the executive aspects of the self, described above, are important predictors of youth self-esteem, even though various studies ascribe different roles to them: as predictors of self-esteem (Asgharzadeh et al., 2025; Josphanloo, 2025; Kaur & Prusty, 2024; Sun, 2025), effects of self-esteem (Servidio et al., 2018) or significant correlates of self-esteem (Harper & Marschall, 1991; Li et al., 2020). Research has also repeatedly shown a reciprocal relationship between self-esteem and the variables in the model (Li et al., 2023). Empirical verification of the assumption about the predictive role of the executive aspects of the Self, described here in relation to self-esteem, is the goal of the presented project.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND AIM

My research aimed to establish the relationship of self-esteem and selected psychological factors and dispositions that capture the self's executive aspects, such as basic hope, personal competence, various coping strategies and social adaptation, as well as determining the predictive power of each of these variables in relation to self-esteem. The research was driven by the following research questions:

Q-1: Is self-esteem related, and if so, how, to basic hope, the sense of personal competence, various (dispositional) coping styles, and social adaptation of the youth sample?

Q-2: Which of the studied variables are predictive of self-esteem and in what order of relevance?

Based on theoretical findings and results of previous research, the following hypotheses were posited:

H-1: Statistically significant positive correlations are expected between self-esteem and the selected variables: basic hope, the sense of personal competence, active and humour coping, and social adaptation. Negative correlation is expected between level of self-esteem and emotion-focused coping.

H-2: The variables included in the tested model are mostly expected to be significant predictors of the respondents' self-esteem.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The dependent variable (i.e., self-esteem) was measured by Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (SES), which was adapted to the Polish context by Łaguna et al (2007, 2008). The scale consists of ten diagnostic statements that serve to gauge young adults' and adults' global self-esteem. The Cronbach's α reliability coefficient of the scale ranges from 0.81 to 0.83 for various age groups. The scale has a high internal consistency, and its theoretical validity and its sufficient correlation with other scales for measuring self-esteem have been well documented (Łaguna et al., 2007).

The study also relied on the *Skala Kompetencji Osobistej* (KompOs: Personal Competence Scale) developed by Juczyński (2012, pp. 95–104). The scale measures the generalised sense of self-efficacy and its two components: the belief that one has enough strength to initiate action (A) and the belief that one is perseverant enough to continue this action (B). The internal consistency of KompOs as calculated by means of the Cronbach's α stands at 0.72 for the scale as a whole, 0.74 for subscale A, and 0.62 for subscale B. Its reliability, as established by the test-retest method within an interval of six weeks, is 0.51 for older youth (15 and 17 years of age; see Juczyński, 2012, p. 96).

The study also used a modified version of the BHI-R Questionnaire designed by Trzebiński and Zięba (2004). The version of the BHI-R Questionnaire posted by Trzebiński at ResearchGate on 12th January 2022. BHI stands for the Basic Hope Inventory. The Questionnaire contains twelve statements, the sum of which gives an overall score of basic hope (general level). Scores can also be separately calculated for two subscales: 'Order of the world' and 'Benevolence of the world' by adding up answers to, respectively, seven and five statements marked in the key. The internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's α from 0.75 to 0.91) and the stability of results over time (Pearson's r between 0.40 and 0.61) are satisfactory (Zięba, 2015).

Coping with stress was assessed by means of the *Jak Sobie Radzisz* Scale (JSR: How are you coping) developed by Juczyński and Ogińska-Bulik (2012, pp. 59–70). The scale is bipartite – dispositional and situational. Three coping strategies: Active Coping, Focus on Emotions, and Seeking Social Support are evaluated separately. Internal consistency of the dispositional version as established by the Cronbach's α is 0.86 for the entire scale, with the coefficients for the three scales separately ranging from 0.68 to 0.73. For the situational version, the internal consistency coefficients range from 0.66 to 0.71. Stability of the scale as assessed by the test-retest method within an interval of six weeks is also satisfactory (Juczyński & Ogińska-Bulik, 2012, p. 64).

The Coping Humor Scale (CHS), proposed by Martin and Lefcourt and adapted to the Polish context by Kruczek and Basińska (2018a), was another measure used in my study. The CHS is a self-description scale in which respondents define the intensity of behaviours, where humour is used as a response to stressful situations. The original Questionnaire includes 7 items. Following Martin's suggestion

(1996), the Polish version dropped question 4, which was poorly correlated with the general score. Reliability of this version of the scale as measured by the Cronbach's α is 0.72 (Kruczek & Basińska, 2018b).

The research was carried out in 2024. It included a sample of 590 individuals aged from 13 to 18. The sampling followed the purposive random method as the institutions were deliberately selected by the pre-defined criterion (facility type), while the sampling of youngsters in the selected institutions was random. The study adopted a simplified method of determining the level of social adaptation of young people based on the type of educational institution attended by the respondents, while MOW and MOS were treated as educational environments characterized by an increased risk of adaptation difficulties, therefore their pupils were treated as one group. The sample included 269 young people committed to Youth Educational Centres (Polish: *Młodzieżowy Ośrodek Wychowawczy*) and Youth Sociotherapy Centres (Polish: *Młodzieżowy Ośrodek Socjoterapii*), and 321 students of (general and technical) secondary schools from the Lower Silesian Voivodeship. Females accounted for 45% of the sample and males for 55%. Age-group proportions in the structure of the sample were similar, with youngsters aged 15 and younger making up 55% of the sample and older adolescents (16-18 years of age) accounting for 45%.

DATA ANALYSIS

The study involved children and young adults. It was carried out at schools and Centres, with youths' and parental consent obtained by the administration of the facilities. Research Ethics Board of the Research Federation of WSB & DSW Universities stated a positive opinion about the project's ethical standards.

Correlation analyses were based on Pearson's r test. The relationship between the level of adaptation (0 – maladapted, 1 – well-adapted) and the level of self-esteem was assessed using the Student's t test for independent samples, which was justified by the dichotomous nature of the independent variable and the continuous nature of the dependent variable. In this system, the t -test is statistically equivalent to the point-biserial correlation – a special case of the r -Pearson correlation, which allows the result to be interpreted as both the difference in the means and the strength of the relationship. Subsequently, multiple linear regression models were compared to construct the optimum regression model for explaining self-esteem. This model was then analysed further. Statistical significance was set at the level 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$). Statistical calculations were performed by means of PQStat (v.1.6.2. 64-bit).

RESULTS

First, basic descriptive statistics were calculated for the variables included in the regression model. Their values are presented in Table 1 below. For the young people's global self-esteem, which was a dependent variable in the model, the arithmetic mean was calculated at $M = 26.36$ for the entire sample.

Table 1

Analysed variables: descriptive statistics (N=590)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Self-esteem	26.363	5.747	10	40	-0.091	-0.111
Coping humour (CH)	15.219	3.896	6	24	-0.113	-0.523
Active coping	5.488	3.042	0	12	-0.0161	-0.622
Focus on emotions	5.044	3.752	0	12	0.216	-1.072
Seeking social support	4.568	3.081	0	12	0.292	-0.682
Basic hope (BH)	38.747	8.203	4	60	-0.587	0.614
BH-order of the world	22.895	5.019	7	35	-0.547	0.458
BH-benevolence of the world	15.924	3.755	5	25	-0.433	-0.060
Personal competence	31.978	6.392	15	48	-0.159	-0.330
KompOs – strength	16.174	4.040	6	24	-0.345	-0.416
KompOs – perseverance	15.803	3.704	6	24	-0.020	-0.281

Source: own research.

A *t*-test was carried out to establish the relationship between the level of adaptation (0-maladapted, 1-well-adapted) and the level of self-esteem (see Table 2 below).

Table 2

Self-esteem and social adaptation level

	Maladapted (N=269)		Well-adapted (N=321)		Student's <i>t</i> -test	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Self-esteem	25.509	5.940	27.078	5.489	-3.329*	< .001

* $p < 0.05$

Source: own research

There is a relationship between the level of social adjustment and self-esteem – well-adapted youth have a higher level of self-esteem ($M = 27.078$) than their maladjusted peers ($M = 25.509$).

Pearson's r test was used to determine the correlation of other variables with the self-esteem of adolescents (see Table 3 below).

Table 3

Self-esteem vs. basic hope, personal competence, and coping (Pearson's r -correlations)

	Self-esteem	
	r	p
Basic hope (BH)	0.309*	<0.001
BH-order of the world	0.249*	<0.001
BH-benevolence of the world	0.350*	<0.001
Coping humour (CH)	0.422*	<0.001
Active coping	0.135*	0.001
Focus on emotions	-0.443*	<0.001
Seeking social support	0.034	0.415
Personal competence	0.516*	<0.001
KompOs – strength	0.572*	<0.001
KompOs – perseverance	0.267*	<0.001

* $p < 0.05$

Source: own research

Correlation analyses confirmed statistically significant correlations between self-esteem and most of the variables in the model. The strongest positive correlations were recorded for self-esteem and strength of engagement in action (which is a dimension of personal competence; $r = 0.572$, $p < 0.001$), global personal competence (i.e., the generalised sense of self-efficacy; $r = 0.516$, $p < 0.001$), and coping humour ($r = 0.422$, $p < 0.001$). Slightly weaker positive correlations were found for self-esteem and general basic hope ($r = 0.309$, $p < 0.001$), its two components: beliefs that the world is benevolent ($r = 0.350$, $p < 0.001$) and ordered ($r = 0.249$, $p < 0.001$), and perseverance in goal pursuit ($r = 0.267$, $p < 0.001$). Besides, correlation analyses also showed a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and focus on emotions, which is one way of coping with difficult situations ($r = -0.443$, $p < 0.001$). My research did not identify any significant correlation between self-esteem and seeking social support as a coping strategy ($r = 0.034$, $p = 0.415$).

To refine the analysis of correlations between self-esteem and the selected executive aspects of individual functioning and to more accurately assess the predictive power of independent variables regarding self-esteem, multiple regression analysis was carried out for the best-fitting model, as established by comparing various regression models. The model comprises six independent variables that jointly explain almost 47% of the variance of the dependent variable (see Table 4 below).

Table 4
Predictors of self-esteem (multiple regression model)

Independent variable	Coefficient <i>b</i>	Standardised coefficient <i>b</i> – β	<i>t</i> statistics	<i>p</i>
Model statistics	Number of variables = 6 $R = 0.687$ $R^2 = 0.471$ Standard estimation error = 4.20 Corrected $R^2 = 0.466$			
Adaptation	1.065	0.092	3.020*	0.002
BH – benevolence	0.236	0.154	4.885*	<0.001
CHS	0.244	0.165	4.791*	<0.001
JSR-A	0.221	0.117	3.343*	<0.001
JSR-E	-0.463	-0.302	-8.147*	<0.001
KompOs – strength	0.462	0.325	8.918*	<0.001
Intercept term	10.907	-----	8.845	<0.001

* $p < 0.05$

Source: own research

Together, the variables in the model explain almost 47% of the variance of self-esteem. The strength of engagement in action, which is one dimension of personal competence (generalised sense of self-efficacy), was found to be the strongest predictor of self-esteem ($\beta = 0.325$, $p < 0.001$). The emotion-focused coping style was identified as the second significant predictor of self-esteem ($\beta = -0.302$, $p < 0.001$), but the correlation was negative in this case. Coping humour was the third strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.165$, $p < 0.001$) and it was followed by the belief in the benevolence of the world and people ($\beta = 0.154$, $p < 0.001$) and by active coping, which increases individuals' sense of agency and self-worth ($\beta = 0.117$, $p < 0.001$). The correlation of self-esteem with social adaptation was significant, even though it was the weakest of all ($\beta = 0.092$, $p = 0.002$). The direction of correlations was compatible with prior expectations.

DISCUSSION

The level of self-esteem of MOW and MOS pupils turned out to be lower than the level of this variable in the group of well-adapted students of mainstream schools. These findings are consistent with results reported by other authors, who have shown that the mean global self-esteem of youngsters in sociotherapy centres, standing at $M = 24.31$ (Nowak, 2022) or $M = 26.94$ for example (see Choszczyk-Kwiatkowska, 2025), is lower in comparison with the self-esteem of

well-adapted youth. Other studies have also revealed that adolescents' criminal behaviour and high levels of social maladaptation are associated with their low self-esteem, as measured by the SES (Levy, 1997; Van der Laan et al., 2010). While some research has admittedly found socially maladapted young adults to have high self-esteem at the level of $M = 28.16$ (Konaszewski & Sosnowski, 2017), most of the literature conveys a clear view that high, positive, and realistic self-esteem is correlated with good social functioning and adaptation, while youngsters with low self-esteem are more likely to exhibit symptoms of maladaptation (Bartkowiicz, 2013; Levy, 1997; Reykowski, 1976; Siemionow, 2011; Wosik-Kawala, 2007; Wysocka & Ostafińska-Molik, 2014).

Results of correlation analyses are convergent with previous research, confirming a strong relationship between self-esteem and dispositions that reflect the self's executive aspects (Fecenec, 2008; Judge et al., 2002; Kuiper & Martin, 1993; Łaguna 2006; Łaguna et al., 2007).

Negative correlation between self-esteem and focus on emotions, which is one way of coping with difficult situations, as well as the lack of a significant correlation between self-esteem and seeking social support as a coping strategy, correspond to the research-confirmed notion that individuals with high self-esteem feel more agentive and efficacious. Consequently, they tend to choose active coping strategies when faced with difficult situations (which additionally enhances their self-esteem). They are also less likely to focus on emotions to improve well-being as well as suspend their activity and fall back on others' care and support (Baumeister et al., 2003; Kofta, 2001).

In regression analysis, strength of engagement in action, which is a component of self-efficacy, emerged as the strongest predictor of self-esteem. Baumeister's (1998) notion is that people develop self-esteem by evaluating their self-efficacy. Individuals who can control impulses, initiate action, and pursue achievement goals begin to perceive themselves as competent, and this increases their self-esteem by including new constructive information in their self-image. Individuals' strength and activity make them succeed more frequently; this attainment improves their self-esteem (Bachman & O'Malley, 1986) and elicits social approval, which is an important source of positive self-image and self-esteem (Wojciszke, 2002). Previous research showed that generalised self-efficacy could predict individuals' self-esteem (Bandura, 1986; Eckert, 1992; Sun et al., 2025). Besides, increase in self-efficacy was found to significantly boost self-worth and positive experiences were reported to strengthen appreciation of one's own skills, along with the sense of personal and work achievement (Adalsteinsson et al. 2014; Dursun, 2019; Phan & Ngu, 2014), as well as the belief in success and capacity to act effectively (Khan et al., 2015).

In this study, some coping styles were also revealed to be significant predictors of self-esteem, with self-esteem being positively correlated with active coping

and negatively with emotion-focused coping. The literature has widely reported the well-substantiated notion that individuals with high self-esteem possess ample and ordered self-knowledge, which makes them better equipped to tolerably and accurately appraise their coping capacity and to opt for task-focused coping with stress more readily than those with low self-esteem, who tend to concentrate on their negative emotions in challenging situations (Grzegółowska-Klarkowska, 2001; Kořta, 2001; Lachowicz-Tabaczek, 2001; Stanek, 2021). It is so because low self-esteem is associated with a dearth of mental resources that are provided by self-appreciation; this paucity compels individuals to devote their efforts to restoring wellbeing, which was lost in grappling with a difficult situation (Fryer et al. 1997). The more frequently individuals decide not to tackle their problem actively and, instead, focus on their negative affect to alleviate tension and unpleasant emotions, the lower their self-esteem will be (Joshi, 2025; Kaur & Prusty, 2024).

The study also showed coping humour to be a predictor of self-esteem. Coping humour is a specific strategy of emotional regulation in which humour is used to reinterpret stressful situations, reduce tension, and increase mental detachment from difficulty (Kuiper & Martin, 1993). Previous empirical analyses established that people who tended to use humour as a coping strategy characteristically had higher self-esteem. In the overview of ten years' worth of research on CHS, Martin (1996) stated that coping humour was positively correlated with self-worth, lower real/ideal self-incongruence, and a higher stability of self-esteem. Humour works as a buffer mechanism in this regard as it attenuates the impact of stress and negative emotions on self-esteem processes, which helps individuals safeguard positive self-perception. More recent research has corroborated these connections in mediation models. Liao et al. (2025) have shown that coping humour indirectly increases self-esteem by fostering resilience and that self-esteem is a meaningful link in predicting subjective wellbeing. These findings converge with the frameworks in which humour facilitates the mental 'processing' of stressors in ways that help people retain positive identity (Dixon, 2021). These studies indicate that coping humour can be treated as an adaptive predictor of self-esteem, particularly under stressful circumstances.

The belief that the world is benevolent, which is an element of basic hope, was the next most significant predictor of self-esteem in my research. As part of one's 'worldview' and early beliefs about the world, basic hope forms a vital interpretive framework; specifically, if one believes that the world makes sense and is friendly, one is more likely to have a positive self-perception as a person whose needs, plans, and values are relevant and can potentially be achieved owing to the consistent benevolence of 'fate' (Trzebiński & Zięba, 2003). Besides, the belief in the benevolence of the world motivates people to act, as a result of which, when faced with difficult situations, individuals more eagerly undertake action that may reverse the unfavourable course of events, and this promotes the development of

self-worth and personal competence, that is, of global self-esteem (Erikson, 1997, 2002; Trzebiński & Zięba, 2003). So far, there has been rather little research on the model presupposing the predictive role of basic hope regarding self-esteem (Bukhari, 2022), yet some studies have confirmed significant correlations between these variables (e.g., Zięba, 2012).

The research indicates that the level of social adaptation is a significant predictor of self-esteem as well. Encompassing the skills of effective functioning in interpersonal relations and of adequate response to social requirements, social adaptation is regarded as a salient factor in forming global self-esteem. According to Leary's (1999) sociometer theory, self-esteem reflects an individual's sense of being accepted and considered valuable by others. Socially well-adapted individuals more frequently experience acceptance, positive feedback and support, which reinforces their sense of self-worth. Besides, effective communication, social skills, and adjustment to group norms are sources of positive social experiences and enhance people's sense of agency and interpersonal competences, which directly augments positive self-image. Social adaptation also operates as a buffer that shields one against experiences that threaten self-esteem, such as rejection, isolation, or negative social evaluation. Current empirical research confirms the predictive role of social adaptation with respect to self-esteem. For example, longitudinal research has shown that school adaptation predicts an increase in self-esteem over time (Choe & Yu, 2025). Also, a meta-analysis of forty-eight longitudinal research studies confirms that there is a stable reciprocal connection between social relations and self-esteem, where the quality of social relations significantly predicts later changes in self-esteem (Harris & Orth, 2020). These findings indicate that social adaptation is an important developmental resource that supports that development and maintenance of positive self-esteem.

Summing up, the obtained results indicate that the executive aspects of the self – basic hope, personal competence, coping strategies, and social adjustment – play a significant predictive role in adolescents' self-esteem. This is so both among those individuals who function within the general education system and within the educational and sociotherapy centres. These resources support effective goal attainment, success achievement, and constructive coping with environmental demands, thereby strengthening self-worth, a sense of agency, and a positive self-image.

In the context of pedagogical processes, this relationship points to the circular nature of students' psychosocial development: by creating opportunities for success, providing adequate support, and offering constructive feedback, the educational environment can initiate and reinforce positive self-regulatory mechanisms. From this perspective, the educational institution (including resocialization or therapeutic settings) becomes a space for developing personal resources – promot-

ing internalization of self-efficacy beliefs, development of coping strategies, and formation of a mature identity. In this way, strengthening the executive aspects of the self may serve both developmental and corrective functions, hence supporting prevention of social maladjustment and fostering positive youth adaptation.

CONCLUSIONS

The research reported above indicates the predictive role of the self's executive aspects in the development of young adults' self-esteem. In this way, it provides important data on the mechanisms of self-image formation in adolescence. A high level of these variables promotes goal achievement and generation of positive life experiences, which translates into reinforcement of self-efficacy and global self-esteem.

Development of the self's executive functions in prevention programmes and educational, rehabilitative, and therapeutic practices can help youngsters develop and sustain realistic self-esteem. It is all the more important because, in case of children and young adults, prevention programmes focused on developing active coping skills and shaping self-worth and self-efficacy are reported to be most effective (Juczyński, 2012). The self's executive aspects, in particular the belief in one's self-efficacy, significantly affect engagement in and continuation of any action and are also a fundamental prerequisite of behaviour change, which is the crucial goal of social rehabilitation.

LIMITATIONS

One limitation to the findings of this research study and the conclusions drawn from them is the fact that the sampling was purposive-random and the sample size was modest. Another limitation is the simplified method of determining the level of social adaptation of adolescents on the basis of the type of educational institution. Besides, the analyses were carried out based on self-descriptive measures of the self's executive aspects, which might cause errors related to subjective evaluation. In the project, the analyses were conducted without controlling for such contextual factors as social support, social background, and personality traits, which might moderate the correlations under study. This indicates that the results and findings are by no means ultimate or conclusive; rather, they are meant to encourage further explorations of the factors involved in young adults' self-esteem.

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WYBRANE PREDYKTORY SAMOOCENY MŁODZIEŻY ZWIĄZANE Z WYKONAWCZYMI ASPEKTAMI JA

Wprowadzenie: Wykonawcze aspekty „Ja” jako system odpowiedzialny za samokontrolę, regulację zachowania i skuteczną realizację celów, mogą pełnić funkcję predyktorów samooceny, ponieważ efektywność procesów samoregulacyjnych sprzyja doświadczaniu sprawstwa, kompetencji i zgodności działania z własnymi standardami, co wtórnie wzmacnia globalną ocenę siebie.

Cel badań: Celem badań było sprawdzenie związków samooceny młodzieży z wybranymi zasobami i dyspozycjami psychologicznymi określającymi wykonawcze aspekty Ja, takimi jak: nadzieja podstawowa, kompetencja osobista, różne sposoby radzenia sobie oraz społeczne przystosowanie.

Metoda badań: Badaniami objęto 590 wychowanków Młodzieżowych Ośrodków Wychowawczych i Młodzieżowych Ośrodków Socjoterapii oraz uczniów ogólnodostępnych szkół ponadpodstawowych w wieku 13-18 lat.

Wyniki: Przeprowadzone analizy wykazały predykcyjną rolę kompetencji osobistej (wymiar siła), radzenia sobie (aktywnego, skoncentrowanego na emocjach i za pomocą humoru), nadziei podstawowej (wymiar przekonanie o przychylności świata) oraz społecznego przystosowania w kształtowaniu samooceny młodzieży.

Wnioski: Badania dostarczają ważnych danych na temat mechanizmów rozwoju obrazu siebie w okresie adolescencji. Wnioski mogą posłużyć do konstruowania programów profilaktycznych oraz oddziaływań wychowawczych, resocjalizacyjnych i terapeutycznych w zakresie wzmacniania i urealniania samooceny młodzieży.

Słowa kluczowe: samoocena, młodzież, kompetencja osobista, radzenie sobie, nadzieja podstawowa, przystosowanie społeczne