



Factors Influencing Self-Esteem of People with Disabilities in Early Adulthood

Fathima Ciptaning Prabandaru^{1*}, Nida Hasanati², Indra Pahala³
Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Fathima Ciptaning: fathimacipt@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Influencing, Disabilities, Adulthood

Received : 15, May

Revised : 20, June

Accepted: 17, July

©2025 Ardianto, Handaru, Pahala (s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

Self-esteem is a form of evaluation that individuals carry out towards themselves. Self-esteem is the self-esteem that a person has. For people with disabilities, self-esteem is often influenced by additional challenges, such as social stigma, limited accessibility, and psychological barriers. This journal review aims to identify and analyze factors that influence self-esteem in young adults with disabilities, including self-acceptance, social support, personal achievement, and an inclusive environment. The results of the analysis show that social support and self-acceptance play a significant role in increasing self-esteem, while stigma and lack of equal opportunities can be obstacles that reduce self-confidence. Therefore, collective efforts from various parties are needed to create an environment that supports the development of self

INTRODUCTION

In most ancient cultures, adulthood was achieved when puberty was complete or nearing completion, and the child's genitals had matured and they were capable of reproduction. Adulthood generally began between the ages of 20 and 40 or 45 (Desmita, 2013). Early adulthood was a time for work and love, sometimes leaving little time for other pursuits. Some adults would participate in community activities to socialize and commit to a more stable life and adhere to established rules. Adulthood is the age when individuals transition from adolescence to early adulthood and experience many changes. These changes include physical appearance, more mature thinking, and the individual's obligation to carry out activities that have become part of the culture of the surrounding community.

Self-esteem is a self-assessment of the results of one's efforts, perceiving how much one's behavior aligns with their ideal behavior. This allows an individual to view themselves as capable, meaningful, valuable, and competent. Self-esteem is a positive and negative evaluation of oneself, encompassing self-acceptance, self-confidence, and appreciation for one's own abilities. This self-evaluation is reflected in one's social behavior and in facing life's demands. Self-esteem encompasses two aspects: self-acceptance and self-respect. Self-acceptance is an individual's ability to accept all circumstances, including strengths and weaknesses, and to accept all circumstances. Self-respect is an individual's ability to recognize and appreciate their own qualities, such as optimizing one's talents or skills. Within these two aspects, self-esteem has five dimensions: 1) academic, 2) social, 3) emotional, 4) family, and 5) physical. This is further influenced by self-esteem.

Self-esteem is an individual's evaluation of themselves, reflecting how much they value, accept, and feel valued as a person (Rosenberg, 1965). This concept plays a crucial role in psychosocial development and individual well-being, and is related to various aspects such as self-confidence, motivation, and social relationships (Orth & Robins, 2014). In early adulthood, self-esteem becomes an important indicator in assessing successful adaptation to life's demands, such as economic independence, intimate relationships, and career achievement. High self-esteem allows individuals to be resilient in facing challenges, while low self-esteem is often associated with symptoms of anxiety, depression, and even social isolation (Twenge & Campbell, 2018).

According to the WHO (2011), disability is a general term encompassing impairments, activity limitations, and restrictions on social participation. Young adults with disabilities face dual challenges: in addition to navigating a developmental phase that demands independence, they also have to contend with stigma, limited access, and environmental barriers. These conditions can hinder the development of a healthy self-identity and negatively impact their self-esteem (Shakespeare, 2013). Research shows that individuals with disabilities often experience negative stereotypes that influence their self-perception. The view that people with disabilities are unproductive or incapable is often internalized into negative self-beliefs (Corrigan et al., 2009). This factor is directly related to low self-esteem and feelings of helplessness.

Social support plays a role in the process of forming self-esteem, namely as a fulfillment of an individual's need for love and affection, as a motivator and inspiration, a provider of encouragement, namely providing support for something that has been done, and as a positive comparison, namely providing information about the lives of others who are less fortunate than the individual. The higher the acceptance and support from the people around them, the more likely an individual will have a positive perception of themselves, thus fostering high self-esteem.

The number of people with disabilities in the world today is quite large, at least 10% of the world's population suffers from various disabilities such as physical, mental, and social disabilities. Meanwhile, 80% of these people with disabilities live in developing countries (Forouzan, Mahmoodi, Shushtari, 2013). The 2018 Riskesdes (Village Health Research) found that 3.3% of children aged 5-17 years old have disabilities. Physical disability is a term used to identify individuals who have difficulty performing daily activities and optimizing the function of their limbs. Various obstacles experienced have a negative impact on individuals with physical disabilities that can hinder their activities.

A person with a physical disability is an individual who has a physical inability to carry out bodily functions as in normal conditions due to the presence of deformities or obstacles in the bones, muscles, and joints that can be caused by congenital defects, illness, and accidents (Merdiyasi, 2013). A person with a physical disability is someone who has orthopedic, bodily, and physical disabilities according to Misbach (2014). Physical disabilities in foreign dictionaries are often referred to as crippled, physically handicapped. People with physical disabilities are able to become happy individuals when they feel affectively happy and optimistic about their lives and cognitively they feel satisfied with their lives. Positive social contact makes people with physical disabilities feel various supports from their surroundings. This social contact is what can improve the psychological condition of people with physical disabilities to be more positive than before (Adelina, 2018). People with physical disabilities are like humans in general, who want to achieve well-being and happiness. Someone who has a positive life well-being will have positive self-confidence, be confident in getting good grades that many people like, then have good and strong physical endurance, are able to cope well with problems and stress, and have directed behavior for and have a purpose in life.

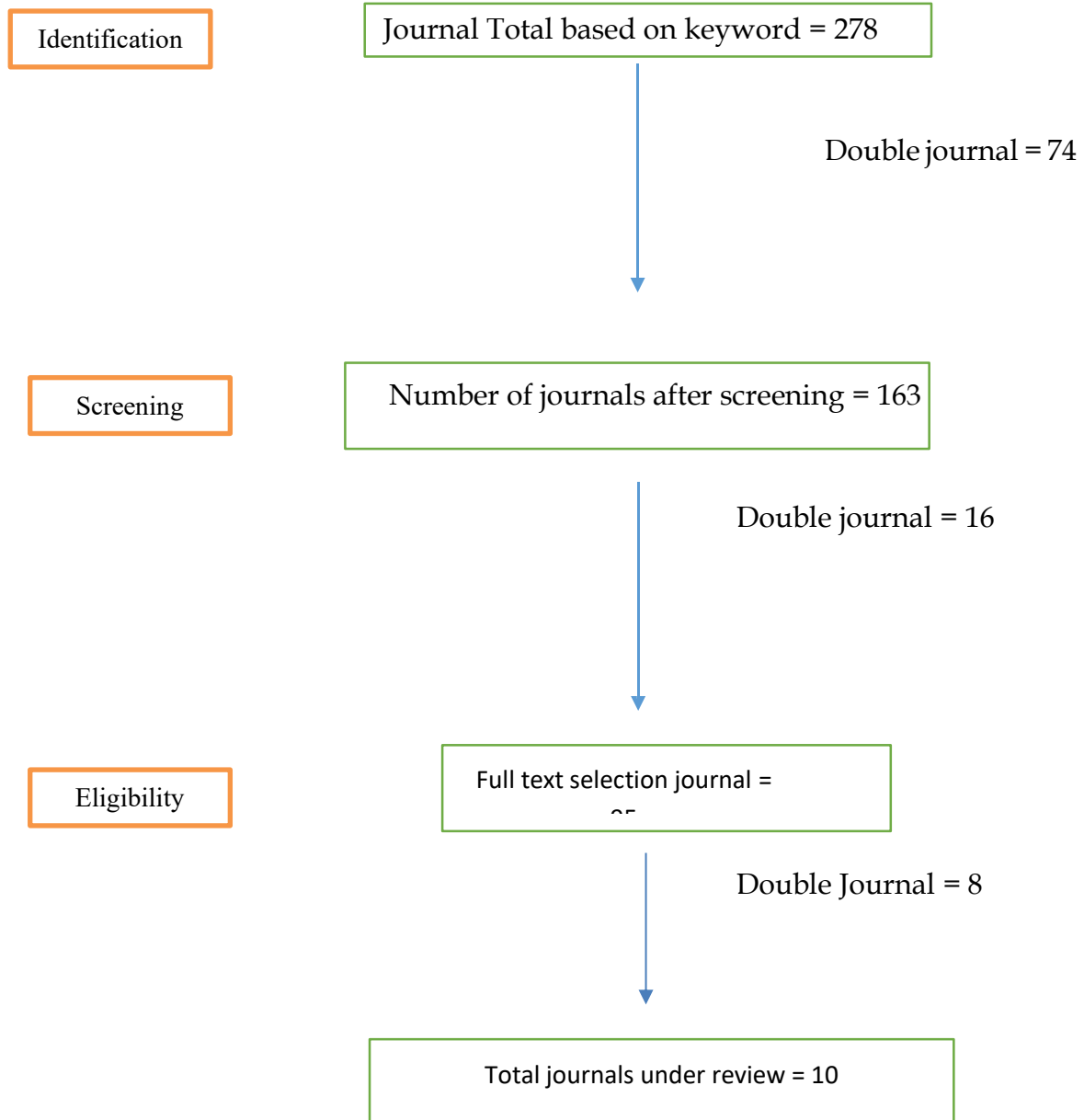
METHOD

In the review process, the author begins by creating research questions. The author uses the PCC formulation by referring to this systematic question. The author constructs research questions. The research question in this review is, what is the form of self-esteem in people with disabilities? Next, the author continues the process by designing search keywords in the database. After the author obtains the terms from the research question, the author continues the search with the terms found, namely self-esteem and disability. From several search terms, the author enters several Scopus and Publish and Perish databases. Furthermore, after several articles are collected, the author screens using Rayyan.

The author filters from the title and abstract, and continues with the entire manuscript. After selecting from 278 journals, there are 10 journals that meet the criteria, namely factors that influence self-esteem in people with disabilities.

Prisma

Prism Chart for Journal Selection Flow



Include

The journal selection process can be seen through the prism graph in Figure 1. Researchers determine the limitations in the journal review by 1) journal content discussing self-perception and self-esteem in people with and without disabilities, 2) year of publication of the journal in the last 10 years, 3) English-language journals, 4) Types of qualitative, quantitative and Mixed Method research. Some criteria for journals that were not selected were 1)

journals that discuss self-esteem but do not include self-esteem in early adulthood, 2) not using English, 3) articles in the form of meta-analyses, journals.

DISCUSSION

List of journals explaining factors influencing self-esteem in people with disabilities in early adulthood:

NO	Author	Type of Disability	Age	Main findings
1	Yamada et al. (2021)	Physical and sensory	20-40 years old	Education, employment, and social participation contribute to self-esteem.
2	Tsermentseli	ASD	Young Adult	Self-esteem moderates the relationship between social support and life satisfaction
3	Chalk (2016)	Neurodivergent	Emerging adults	Self-acceptance and mindfulness significantly influence self-esteem
4	Zeng et al. (2020)	Physical	Early adult	Internalization of stigma and negative coping lower self-esteem
5	Verdugo et al. (2017)	Intelektual	Early adult	Productive participation and social inclusion increase self-esteem
6	Bartoni et al. (2016)	Cedera Otak	Adult	Physical and psychological impairments (depression) predict low self-esteem

7	Mc.Millan et al. (2016)	Multiple Sclerosis	18-45 years old	Self-esteem mediates social participation and mental well-being
8	Gómez et al. (2022)	Visual Impairment	16-35 years old	Social and gender pressures influence self-esteem
9	Li & Luo (2022)	Mixed	Adult	Decreased self-acceptance decreased self-esteem
10	BMC Public Health (2017)	Physical	Adult	Social support as a protective factor against depression and low self-esteem

Overall, the findings confirm that self-esteem influences a person's resilience. Although the research findings appear to indicate that overall self-esteem is low, this does not mean they lack it altogether. These results imply that self-acceptance and self-confidence must be strengthened and enhanced. This is to help people with disabilities better understand how to cope with feelings of insecurity and live confidently. Self-acceptance, social support, social stigma, the environment, achievement and productivity, adequate facilities, and self-confidence are all highly influential and tied to a person's self-esteem.

People with disabilities must be encouraged to believe in their abilities and develop skills to maximize the opportunities available to them. Discrimination or stigma from society can contribute to low self-esteem. However, these abilities or skills can be used as resilience to overcome these negative impacts.

Providing supportive facilities, such as disability-friendly facilities and equal opportunities with others, can boost the self-esteem of people with disabilities. Therefore, it can be concluded that, based on the factors influencing self-esteem, interventions that support self-acceptance, increased accessibility, and social and individual empowerment can help people with disabilities in early adulthood achieve higher self-esteem. Self-perception will continue to be related to self-esteem and needs to be continuously developed for people with physical disabilities because it can cause anxiety about their bodies (Jose & Kenneth, 2008).

Based on findings from 10 studies, several key factors consistently influence the self-esteem of people with disabilities in early adulthood:

a. Social Support

Support from family, peers, and the wider community is a strong protective factor. Research by Yamada et al. (2021) and Tsermentseli (2022) shows that the quality of positive social interactions not only supports well-being but can also buffer against the impact of stress and stigma. This aligns with the buffering hypothesis of Cohen & Wills (1985).

b. Self-Acceptance and Mindfulness

Acceptance of disability significantly increases positive self-perceptions. Chalk (2016) and Li & Luo (2022) found that individuals who accept their physical/psychological limitations tend to have higher self-esteem. Mindfulness practices also support the development of self-awareness and acceptance.

c. Stigma and Negative Internalization

A study by Zeng et al. (2020) showed that internalization of social stigma negatively impacts self-esteem, especially when accompanied by maladaptive coping strategies. Stigma also affects an individual's ability to build healthy relationships with others.

d. Social and Productive Involvement

Participation in work, sports, education, or community organizations has been shown to increase self-esteem. McMillan et al. (2016) and Verdugo et al. (2017) confirmed that socially active individuals feel more competent and valued.

e. Socioeconomic Factors

Educational and occupational status have also been found to be important predictors of self-esteem (Yamada et al., 2021). Individuals with access to meaningful work report higher self-esteem, supported by previous literature showing that engagement in valued activities strengthens self-identity (Bogart, 2014).

These findings suggest that interventions to improve self-esteem in people with disabilities should focus on:

- Strengthening social support, particularly from family and community,
- Self-acceptance and mindfulness training programs,
- Increasing access to education and social participation,
- Reducing stigma through public education and inclusion campaigns.

CONCLUSION

Self-esteem is a crucial element in building psychological well-being in early adulthood with disabilities. Many factors, such as self-acceptance, social support, social stigma, education, and facilities or accessibility, can influence how individuals perceive and value themselves. Collaborative efforts between individuals with disabilities, their families, communities, and the government are essential to creating an inclusive, supportive, and empowering environment. This allows individuals with disabilities to develop optimally, have high self-confidence, and contribute positively to their social lives. Self-esteem for individuals with disabilities will also be high if these factors are met.

This study aims to identify and analyze factors influencing self-esteem in people with disabilities in early adulthood through a systematic review. Based on a review of ten international journals, it was found that the self-esteem of individuals with disabilities is influenced by various psychosocial factors such as social support, self-acceptance, involvement in social or productive activities, stigma, and socioeconomic status. Social support from the surrounding environment has been shown to be a strong protective factor against low self-esteem. Meanwhile, acceptance of disability and the ability to manage stigma adaptively also play a significant role in strengthening self-identity. Furthermore, involvement in meaningful activities such as work, organization, or study can increase perceptions of self-competence and social contribution. By understanding these factors, it is hoped that the development of future psychosocial interventions can be more targeted, such as through self-acceptance training, increasing social and economic access, and public education to reduce disability stigma. Further research is also recommended to explore the differences in the influence of these factors based on the type of disability and different cultural contexts.

REFERENCE

- Desmita. (2013). *Psikologi Perkembangan*. Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya
- E. Van Roekel, A.J. Oldehinkel, M. Masselink. (2017). Self-esteem in Early Adolescence as Predictor of Depressive Symptoms in Late Adolescence and Early Adulthood : The Mediating Role of Motivational and Social Factors. *Journal Youth Adolescence*.
- Hughes, R.B., Robinson-Whelen, S., Taylor, H.B., Swedlund, N., & Nosek, M.A (2004).
- Enhancing Self-esteem in Women With Physical Disabilities. American Psychological Association. *Journal Rehabilitation Psychology*.
- Ingrid M. Blood, Gordon W. Blood. (2016). Long-term Consequences of Childhood Bullying in Adults who suffer : Social Anxiety, Fear of Negative Evaluation, Self-esteem, and Satisfaction with Life. *Journal of Fluency Disorder*. [Journal of Fluency Disorders 50 \(2016\) 72-84](#)
- Jae-Hyun Kim, Jong Youn Moon. (2021). Association between self-esteem and efficacy and mental health in people with disabilities. Article Plos One.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0257943>

- Jamie C, Sternke. (2010). *Self-Concept and Self-Esteem in Adolescents with Learning Disabilities*.
American Psychological Association.
- Jenny Kurman, Omrit Bar Ilan. (2013). Attachment, self-esteem and test anxiety in adolescence and early adulthood. *An International Journal of Experimental Educational Psychology*.
enneth, Jose Pedro. (2008). PHYSICAL Self-Perceptions And Self-Esteem In Male Basketball Players With And Without Disability: A Preliminary Analysis Using The Physical Self- Perception Profile. *European Journal of Adapted Physical Activity*.
- Stefano Scarpa. (2011). Physical self concept and self-esteem in adolescents and young adults with and without physical disability. *European Journal of Adapted Physical Activity*.
- Wattana Jalayondeja., and friends. (2016). *Physical Activity, Self-esteem, and quality of life among people with Physical Disability*. Southeast Asian J trop Med Public Health.
Yun Hwa Jung, Soo Hyun Kang, Eun-Cheol Park, Suk-Yong Jang. (2022). Impact of the Acceptance of Disability on Self-Esteem among Adults with Disabilities: A Four-Year Follow-Up Study. *International Journal of Environmental Resear*
- Bogart, K. R. (2014). The role of disability self-concept in adaptation to congenital or acquired disability. *Rehabilitation Psychology*, 59(1), 107–115.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035800>
- Cimarolli, V. R., Reinhardt, J. P., Horowitz, A., & Boerner, K. (2019). Perceived overprotection and distress among adults with vision loss: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 38(3), 320–339.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0733464817750274>
- Darling, R. B. (2013). *Disability and identity: Negotiating self in a changing society*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Krahn, G. L., Walker, D. K., & Correa-De-Araujo, R. (2015). Persons with disabilities as an unrecognized health disparity population. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105(S2), S198–S206. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302182>
- Lee, H., & Park, M. (2020). The effects of inclusive sports participation on social capital and psychological well-being of individuals with disabilities. *Disability and Health Journal*, 13(3), 100877. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dhjo.2020.100877>
- Livneh, H., & Antonak, R. F. (2005). Psychosocial adaptation to chronic illness and disability: A primer for counselors. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 83(1), 12–20. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2005.tb00575.x>

- Ng, K. S., & Northcott, S. (2021). A systematic review of self-stigma in people with stroke: Implications for theory and practice. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 43(6), 789–806. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2019.1631843>
- Papalia, D. E., & Martorell, G. (2019). *Experience Human Development* (14th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton University Press.
- Verdugo, M. A., Schalock, R. L., Keith, K. D., & Stancliffe, R. J. (2017). Quality of life and self-esteem in adults with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 42(2), 103–112. <https://doi.org/10.3109/13668250.2016.1196659>