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## Development and Validation of Attitude towards Sacrament of Reconciliation scale among Catholic youths: roles of Self esteem and Gender

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### Abstract

*Sacrament of Reconciliation has drawn much attention in the last decade to catholic ethics studies on account of its focus on reconciliation of humans to grandeur of God's mercy with their own initiative. Extant literature calls for a better understanding of the underlying mechanism for Sacrament of Reconciliation to positively influence God's mercy. We propose personality and individual difference variables to contribute to people's sustainable endorsement of Sacrament of Reconciliation, by empirically studying the dispositional mechanism of personality trait and individual difference variables, namely self esteem and gender and Sacrament of Reconciliation. Our data comprise of sample of 160 catholic youth organization members. The result from exploratory factor analysis showed that attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation has multi- dimensions, namely sacramental abhorrence, sacramental adherence, priestly impression and undue absenteeism. It was found that those youth with low self-esteem show more positive attitude to the Sacrament of reconciliation. These are laity already dipped in their assessment of self and struggle under the burden of guilt of sin or uneasiness of conscience. The Sacrament of Reconciliation becomes a rediscovering path back to the Lord, a source of true interior peace and meaning for the penitent. The Sacrament of Reconciliation must, therefore, be placed at the center of social and religious life once more so as to enable people touch the grandeur of God's mercy with their own hands.*

**KEYWORDS:** sacrament of reconciliation, scale development and validation, self esteem

### INTRODUCTION

*"The Sacrament of Reconciliation must, therefore, be placed at the center once more so as to enable people touch the grandeur of God's mercy with their own hands" (Francis, 2013).*

Religion plays a very vital role in the conceptual and moral formation of the human person with regards to self, others, and the environment. Religion achieves this through her various teachings. One of such teachings is the Catholic Church's



teaching on sacramental confession (auricular confession). According to the teaching of the Roman Catholic, sacraments are the outward signs of an inward reality by which graces are given to those receiving them (Catechism, 2002). The sacraments, they teach, are efficacious by the merits of Christ Jesus who is said to have instituted them. They were instituted by Christ and entrusted to the church. These sacraments of the church include Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance (Confession or Reconciliation), Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Holy Matrimony. They contribute in the most effective manner to the establishment, strengthening and manifestation of the ecclesiastical communion.

Sins and moral failures de-create man and rob him of his vital worth, his self-esteem (Link, 1996). The sacrament of penance and reconciliation which is the primary sacrament of interest in this research is the rite wherein one expresses a specific weakness and sincerely asks God for the grace to overcome such weakness in the future. This sacrament is said to restore the broken relationship between the penitent and God, between the penitent and the social and ecclesial community. It offers the individual a new opportunity to a life of grace and justification, to a recreated life and moral worth.

The Catholic Church has long taught that only God forgives sins especially if one repents of them. Based on Jn.20:23, she teaches that her faithful make their confession to a designated minister (a priest) for the purpose of receiving absolution. According to the Code of the Canon Law 965 of the 1983 Code, only a priest is a minister of the sacrament of penance and reconciliation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation (or as it is sometimes called, sacrament of confession) is an important sacrament within the Catholic Church. According to the Code of Canon Law all Catholics who have attained the age of discretion are bound faithfully to confess serious sins (mortal sins) at least once a year. Canons 989 and 983 of the 1983 Code state that all Catholics who have reached the age of reason are bound to confess their sins (Beal, Coriden, & Green, 2000). This implies that anybody in the church who has been baptized, holds and professes the Catholic faith can make use of this sacrament.

To highlight the importance of this sacrament for the catholic faithful, various important personalities within the catholic fold and Church Councils have spoken extensively on this subject. Thus, even though officially the faithful are called to go to Confession at least once a year, they are encouraged to make frequent use of this sacrament especially when they have wronged God and man



through human frailty. While not strictly required, the Code of Canon Law and the Catechism of the Catholic Church strongly recommend the regular confession of not serious (venial) sins. Furthermore, various popes (e.g., Venerable Pius XII, St. John XXIII, Blessed Paul VI, St. JohnPaul II, etc.) through the years have recommended the frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a means of swifter daily progress along the road of virtue. In fact, Pope Saint JohnPaul II made a habit of going for weekly confessions. Based on the teachings of the Popes and saints (St. Alphonsus, St. John Bosco, St. Pius X, St. Joseph Cafasso, and St. Padre Pio), a frequency between once a month and once a week is recommended. St. Philip Neri says that frequent confession is the cause of great good to the soul, because it purifies it, heals it, and confirms it in the service of God.

These great spiritual men teach that frequent confession is of great value and advantageous to the penitent. Since the Sacrament of Reconciliation is considered a personal encounter with Jesus who is the source of God's grace, help, and forgiveness, the Catholic Church teaches that the practice of frequent confession becomes a powerful means of growing in love with God, in holiness, in humility, and having sorrow for sins: the penitents are renewed in

fervor, strengthened in their resolutions, and supported by divine encouragement

The Sacrament of penance and reconciliation has the efficacy of indispensability. On the one hand is the absolution by the Priest (referred to as the 'form' of the sacrament) and on the other, the three acts of the penitent which are the Contrition, Confession of sins and an intention to change from the old way (referred to as the 'matter' of the sacrament). The Catholic Church teaches that the Sacrament of Reconciliation be approached with a contrite heart. To receive forgiveness, one is required to be contrite. One is required to recall and detest one's sins as sin debases one. Sin robs one of our self-worth. The sacrament effects spiritually and socially on the penitent: the penitent is reconciled with the church, receives healing of mind and soul, and experiences great relief and the healing love of God through the sacrament of reconciliation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation restores this self-worth debased by sin.

It would have been thought then that Catholics would have been streaming to make the most of this sacrament of confession: that not only is it thought to be instituted by Christ, but that it also restores our self-worth diminished by sin. But this does not seem the case as more and more Catholics seem to be staying away from this sacrament. The act of confessing one's private misdeeds could





be a little debasing for some people. Many factors play themselves out as reasons why many Catholics stay away from the sacrament of confession. In contemporary society, some Catholics seem to believe that the sacrament is old-fashioned and that they can do without it. This mind-set, though more evident in western societies, is gradually setting foot in our own African society.

More so, it is important to note here that self-concept plays a vital role in the consequent attitude of youth towards the sacrament of reconciliation. Accordingly, self-concept refers to the perception one has of one's own worth. Such perception includes a composite of one's feelings – a generalized view of one's social acceptance, and one's personal feelings about oneself (Bellmore & Cillessen, 2006) or one's self-esteem. The concept of self-esteem has long been a subject of interest especially in the aspect of relationship and learning. Santrock (2000) and Powell (2004) affirm that self-esteem is at its lowest in adolescence and twice more in females. Self-esteem refers to that evaluative and affective dimensions of self-concept. It is also called self-worth (Santrock, 2000). It has to do with a person's evaluation of personal competence, as well as his evaluation of basic worth as a human being.

Self-esteem could be said to be either high or low. Walz (1991) defined

high self-esteem as appreciating oneself and acknowledging self-worth, self-control, and competence, with a corresponding positive attitude and high self-evaluation. One is said to have high self-esteem when evaluation of one's worth as a human being is positive. People with high self-esteem are generally not afraid to engage in relational activities. They realise that they are good people who sometimes do not-so-good things. It is believed that high self-esteem leads to confidence and positive learning. It is no secret that we all pass through different stages of development and that each stage comes with its own particular challenges. One important item that helps us through these various phases of development with its stressors is a positive self-concept and high self-esteem.

People with high self-esteem are happier, less susceptible to social pressure, achieve at a higher and more persistent level, and are more capable of forming satisfying relationships (Passer & Smith, 2001). People with high self-esteem are less prone to drug and alcohol addictions and are more persistent after failure; they are happier and less neurotic (Tafarodi & Vu, 1997). According to Myers (2002), belief in one's superiority can motivate one to make achievements, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy, and sustaining a sense of hope in difficult times.



On the other hand, Brendgen (2002) defined low self-esteem as having low self-evaluations, self-criticism, and feelings of hopelessness. One is said to have a low self-esteem when the evaluative perception of one's worth as a human being is negative. Low self-esteem leads to the drop-in confidence and learning. People with low self-esteem are generally afraid to enter into relational activities. They feel inferior and they see themselves as worthless and having nothing meaningful to contribute.

People with low self-esteem are neither comfortable with themselves nor with others. One of the various adverse effects of low self-esteem is that those with low self-esteem often have little confidence in their abilities. Often, they also question their self-worth. Frequently, they feel that they would perform poorly even without or before making any trial. People with low self-esteem also tend to have low frustration tolerance (which has to do with one easily throwing in the towel when confronted with hurdles). Since one is less likely to persevere till he achieves success if he gives up easily at a task, low frustration tolerance tends to reinforce low self-esteem. Equally, people with low self-esteem are prone to being passive in life. Could this passivity be extended to the sacrament of confession? Does self-esteem predict attitude to auricular confession?

Self-esteem basically remains same for children. However, self-esteem begins to decline during adolescence especially for females. It had been said that adolescent males generally have a higher self-esteem than adolescent females (Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling, & Potter, 2002). Nonetheless, there is no significant difference in self-esteem between males and females neither in adolescence nor adulthood, according to the American Psychological Association.

One important part of adolescence is the discovering of or developing of one's own identity. Young persons take up various role models. They become particularly image conscious. In creating their identity, they may sometimes rebel against perceived structures especially structures they think inhibit their path to self discovery and actualization. They may run into trouble with their parents, teachers, the law, etc. Yet adolescence is also marked with a period of tension and conflict in trying to carve out a unique identity. There is the conflict between personal incline on the one hand and on the other, familial, societal, and religious expectations. When young persons fail to meet these expectations and when there is lack of support especially from family, friends and those who matter in the life of the youth, self-esteem may be impacted negatively. This decline of the self-esteem of adolescence, especially in the



sphere of religion and morality, may lead to rejection of the faith doctrine or quest for a reunion or reconnection with one's own nurtured faith.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Observation has recently been made of the continuous decline in the number of penitents going for confessions especially amongst youth. What has led to the change from a positive attitude towards the sacrament of reconciliation? The researcher is interested in finding this out. Since the Catholic Church holds that sin debases someone, could self-esteem play a role in the frequency of attendance of confession? This research therefore is aimed at finding out the effect of self-esteem on the recent attitudinal changes towards the sacrament of penance and reconciliation amongst the catholic youth in Enugu diocese.

If sin debases someone and brings down one's self-worth, will one seek immediate restoration of the self-worth in the sacramental confession or will he become so depressed and passive to the sacrament that he/she keeps away? Does one's self-worth influence acceptance of guilt and self-accusation before a priest?

### **Research Questions**

1. Will there be any significant difference between highly self-esteemed and lowly self-esteemed young catholics on their attitude to sacrament of reconciliation?

2. Will there be any significant difference between young catholic males and females with regards to their attitude to sacrament of reconciliation?
3. Will there be any significant interaction effect between gender and self-esteem of young catholics on their attitude to sacrament of reconciliation?

### **Aims and Objectives of the Study**

Of particular interest to this researcher is whether amongst other reasons self-esteem impacts on attendance at the confessional. This researcher is interested in finding out whether there would be any significant difference in attending auricular confession between youths with high self-esteem and low self-esteem. This researcher is also interested in finding out whether or not there would be any significant difference in gender. In other words, this research is aimed at looking at how self-esteem and gender predicate attitude to sacramental reconciliation due to the general low turnout of catholic youth to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I think more research work needs to be conducted on why there seems to be the general decline in the attitude of youth to sacramental reconciliation. This makes for interesting research as the concept of sin, guilt, and moral failure with respect to the Sacrament of Reconciliation seem



to point to a debased self needing restoration.

The study is aimed at achieving the following:

1. To determine the influence of the level of self-esteem (i.e. high self-esteem and low self-esteem) on the attitude of youths toward the Sacrament of Reconciliation
2. To examine the influence of gender difference on the attitude of youths toward the Sacrament of Reconciliation
3. To examine the influence of gender and self-esteem of youths toward the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### **Relevance of the Study**

It is hoped that this research finding would throw more light on some of the reasons why more and more catholic persons especially youths do not frequent the sacrament of reconciliation. This being the case, it would serve to point direction on ways of stemming the tide. It would serve as a good source of information for proper and appropriate planning strategies towards helping catholic youths to better understand and appreciate the Sacrament of Reconciliation and thus, hopefully lead to the frequent use of the sacrament. Pastors of souls and catechists could cash in on this research in helping them prepare their sermons, organising seminars, catechises, retreats, etc.

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

- Catholic Youth refers to young catholic persons between the 15 and 35 years of age as enshrined in the constitution of the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria established in 1985 by the Catholic Bishop Conference of Nigeria as an umbrella body to cater for all catholic youths. This age bracket is consistent with the United Nations' and the African Youth Charter's youth age bracket. For reasons of statistical consistency, the United Nations defines "Youth" as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years; this is without prejudice to other definitions by member states. Furthermore, the African Youth charter (2006) describes as "Youth" every person between the ages of 15 and 35.
- Sacramental reconciliation (also known as the sacrament of Confession and of forgiveness) refers to telling of one's wrongdoings with contrition for sins to a catholic priest for the purpose of obtaining divine forgiveness (absolution) and reconciliation with both God and man. In this work, by Sacrament of Reconciliation reference is made specifically to auricular confession. The one who goes to make confession to a priest is called a penitent.
- Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of his or her self



competencies or self-worth as a human being. One is said to have high self-esteem when evaluation of one's worth as a human being is positive. Inversely, one is said to have a low self-esteem when the evaluative perception of one's worth as a human being is negative.

- Attitude herein refers to a psychological tendency or disposition which could be positively or negatively expressed by evaluating a particular entity (the Sacrament of reconciliation) with some degree of favor or disfavor. Attitude could at times also be uncertain especially when one has got a mixed feeling with respect to a person, event, or thing.

## FRONTEIRS RELEVANT LITERATURE

This chapter would review relevant literatures and theories on each constructs of interest. This review would articulate both the theoretical and empirical aspects. We shall herein within this chapter look at the constructs of self-esteem, reconciliation, youth, and attitude.

### Self-Esteem

Rogers (1959) says of the self that it is an organized, consistent perceptions and beliefs about oneself. Our concept of the self guides and directs our perceptions

and behaviours. Self-concept is the overall perceptions of one's abilities, behaviours and personality. One arrives at this concept of self from experiences and comparing one's actions or way of life with certain known and established standards. The more positive our experience in comparison to these standard, the more positive our self-concept. The more negative our experience, the more negative would be our perception of self. In other words, when there exists incongruence between self-perception and the experience, anxiety is evoked.

Self-esteem comes from the Latin word *aestimare* which means to estimate or to appraise. It, therefore, refers to that positive or negative evaluation of self. Self-esteem refers to that evaluative and affective dimensions of self-concept. It is also called self-worth (Santrock, 2000) as it could also refer to an individual's sense of his or her own self-worth, value. It has to do with a person's evaluation of personal competence, as well as his evaluation of basic worth as a human being. It refers to the extent to which individual values, appreciates, approves of, prizes, or likes himself or herself (Blascovitch & Tomaka, 1991). Rosenberg (1965) described self-esteem as that favourable or unfavourable attitude towards oneself. Speaking generally, self-esteem is considered as an evaluative component of the self-



concept. It is considered a broader representation of the self that includes the cognitive and behavioural aspects as well as the evaluative or affective aspects (Blascovitch & Tomaka, 1991).

Certain persons have high self-esteem, while some others are said to have low self-esteem. A person's evaluative worth of himself or herself can affect the way he or she thinks and feels about self. One is said to have high self-esteem when evaluation of one's worth as a human being is positive. Inversely, one is said to have a low self-esteem when the evaluative perception of one's worth as a human being is negative. People with low self-esteem are neither comfortable with themselves nor with others. One of the various adverse effects of low self-esteem: Those with low self-esteem often have little confidence in their abilities. Often, they also question their self-worth. Frequently, they feel that they would perform poorly even without or before making any trial. People with low self-esteem also tend to have low frustration tolerance (which has to do with one easily throwing in the towel when confronted with hurdles). Since one is less likely to persevere till he achieves success if he gives up easily at a task, low frustration tolerance tends to reinforce low self-esteem. Equally, people with low self-esteem are prone to being passive in life.

Worthy of note, however, is the fact that one's evaluative worth of self is not

permanently engrained. In other words, we could have moments of highs and lows. One who esteems self as low could also have moments when self is esteemed highly. How one esteems or evaluates self is conditioned on a variety of factors. According to Heatherton and Polivy (1991), it is a state of the mind that varies in response to success, failure, change in fortune, social interactions and other life experiences.

Depending on the perspective or dynamics from which one tends to view or understand self-esteem, various theories have made various distinctions on the different types of self-esteem there are. Crocker and Wolfe (2001) and Rogers (1959) distinguish between contingent and non-contingent self-esteem. Greenwald and Farnham (2000) distinguish explicit and implicit self-esteem. Be these as they may, one important fact underlining these distinctions is that self-esteem refers to a person's self-evaluation and that to the extent that one esteems self to that extent would one be affected in thoughts, actions and behaviours.

### **Types of Self-Esteem**

Two major types of self-esteem were identified by Rosenberg (1965): High self-esteem and Low self-esteem. We now talk a look at each of these two self-esteem types.



### **High Self-Esteem**

When one has got a high or positive evaluation of self, one is said to have a high self-esteem. High self-esteem is characterised by the following:

- A. Firm belief in certain held values and principles even in the face of opposition and also feeling secure to change them as experience and situation demand.
- B. Trust in one's ability to form judgement and to act consequently based on duly established process and not feeling guilty based solely on the dislike of one's choice or actions by others.
- C. Less worrying about past or future events but marked by the ability to learn from the past and plan for the future, believing in the present.
- D. Trust in one's ability to solve problems, not holding back as a result of fear of failure or difficulty.
- E. Not being afraid to ask for help when they need it.
- F. Seeing oneself as equal in dignity and not inferior or superior to others while acknowledging and accepting differences in areas of talents, personal prestige or financial situation.
- G. Accepting oneself as of worth and value in the sight of others especially those with whom we have dealings especially amongst friends.
- H. Resisting manipulation and collaborating with others especially when occasions so require.
- I. Admitting and accepting different internal positive or negative feelings or drives and revealing those drives or feelings only when judged appropriate.
- J. Ability to enjoy a great variety of activities.
- K. Sensitivity to the feelings and needs of others and respecting generally accepted social rules and thus, claiming no right or desire to prosper at the expense of others (Bonet, 1997).

### **Low Self-Esteem**

One is said to have a low self-esteem when one has got a negative or poor evaluation of self-worth. Gill (1980) said that low self-esteem people are marked with some of the following characteristics:

- A. Heavy self-criticism, tending to create a habitual state of dissatisfaction with oneself.
- B. Hypersensitivity to criticism, which makes one feel easily attacked and experience obstinate resentment against critics.
- C. Chronic indecision resulting from an exaggerated fear of making a mistake rather than as a result of a lack of information.
- D. Excessive will to please and being unwilling to say "No," resulting from



- the fear of displeasing others (Bonet, 1997).
- E. Quest for perfectionism which may lead to frustration when perfection is not achieved.
  - F. Neurotic guilt: one exaggerates the magnitude of mistakes or offenses and complains about them indefinitely, never reaching full forgiveness.
  - G. Floating hostility and irritability: always on the very verge of exploding for almost every unimportant thing, feels disappointed, unsatisfied, and bad nearly about everything.
  - H. Defensive tendencies wherein the individual has a general negative-pessimistic will to enjoy life.

### **Theories of Self-Esteem**

There are different theories of self-esteem: Socio-Meter Theory, Self-Enhancement Theory, Self-Discrepancy Theory, Terror Management Theory, Down Social Comparison, Self-Discrepancy Theory, Self-Awareness Theory, Self-Focussing Situation, Self-focussing Persons, Self-serving Cognitions, Self-Handicapping, Basking in the Glory of Others, etc. Herein, we shall take a look at few theories of self-esteem especially at The Socio-Meter Theory, The Self-Enhancement Theory, and Down Social Comparison.

### **Socio-Meter Theory**

Leary and Baumeister (2000) propounded this theory. According to this

theory, self-esteem is a function of another goal. Self-esteem, it is held, is pursued not for its own sake, but for the quest for a relational relevance. Rather than for its own sake, self-esteem functions to reflect the extent of one's own inclusion or fitness for inclusion in a social group. Leary and Baumeister (2000) taught that people are motivated to maintain high levels of self-esteem, not because of an inherent need for positive self-evaluation, but rather because positive self-evaluations "serves as a subjective monitor of one's relational evaluations, the degree to which other people regard their relationships with the individual to be valuable, important, or close." Thus, self-esteem is based on whatever is in keeping with the basic norm or acceptability of a particular group to which an individual belongs. It must be noted, however, that this way of viewing self-esteem as an indicator of some other basic abstract psychological entity and not as a motive in its own right or for its own sake is quite a bold step removed from the basic views on self-esteem.

Self-esteem, in the light of the socio-meter theory, is primarily an affective state that provides information regarding the individual's fitness for inclusion into important group relationship. To the extent that one is able to live up to par with the group's norm to that extent his acceptability and consequently his self-





esteem is shot-up. This becomes clearer when one understands that as humans we are inherently configured to “belong to certain number of primary groups and relationships” as being part of a socio group enhances our chances of survival and reproduction in our distant evolutionary past and continues to do so today (Leary and Baumeister, 2000).

### **Self-Enhancement Theory**

People with low self-esteem usually would engage in little or no activity. Such a person lack confidence with respect to their ability to succeed. To ensure further dip in their already low self-esteem, such persons engage in a damage control mechanism by commonly withholding task-oriented efforts (Campbell, 1990). According to Dipboye (1997), “thus, low self-esteem person’s failure may reflect a rational decision to exert low effort rather than irrational consistency with the self-perceptual inadequacy. According to the Self-Enhancement Theory, humans are constantly seeking ways not only to preserve, but also to enhance self-worth regardless of conditions. This is attained by striving to attain not just the goal of an organization, but one’s own as well.

### **Down Social Comparison**

By way of self-defence, people with low self-esteem sometimes make comparison downward with people who are not at par with them. Festinger (1954)

noted that people sometimes do not seek objective information especially when a person’s self-esteem is at stake. Such persons benefit by making downward social comparison with others who are inferior, less successful, less happy, or less fortunate (Wood, 1989). Aspinwall and Taylor (1993) posit that downward social comparison has an uplifting effect on the mood and future outlook of those who suffer low self-esteem. This is a devised mechanism of defence against the impact of low self-esteem. Marsh and Parker (1984) put this beautifully well when they said that it is apparently better to be a big fish in a small pond than a small fish in a big pond.

### **Factors that Influence Self-Esteem**

Various factors lead to low self-esteem. They include social rejection, failures and genetic influence. It is pertinent to note that being deficient in one aspect of life does not mean that one cannot excel in other spheres of life. Thinking opposite to this has lead wrongly and unfortunately to low self-esteem.

### **Social Rejection**

This is fuelled by ethnicity, racism, gender and other forms of discrimination, stigmatization, derogatory remarks, withdrawal of emotional supports and approval. According to Carl Rogers (Santrock, 2000), the withholding of love



and praise unless the individual conforms to parental and social standards (termed conditional positive regard) leads to lower self-esteem. Studies indicate that social rejection lowers people's self-esteem (Myers, 2002).

Children develop high self-esteem when their parents communicate unconditional acceptance and love to them, establish clear guidelines for behaviour and reinforce compliance while at the same time allowing the children the freedom to make decisions and express opinions within those guidelines (Passer and Smith, 2001). Poor parenting style, on the other hand, can lower somebody's self-esteem. Thus, people do need support and encouragement for their self-esteem to rise and blossom.

### **Failures**

These include the inability to achieve successes in the realms that may be economic, social, academic, physical, spiritual, etc. Obviously, one who keeps scoring low marks in class or performs poorly in other activities may develop low self-esteem. So, it is with a lady who fails to maintain a close and loving relationship. She may begin to doubt herself, her worth, her ability, her beauty. Furthermore, failure to cope with a distressing situation may lead one into doubting one's worth. It is also important to note that low self-esteem has been

linked with depression (Harter & Whitesell, 1996). Especially implicated in the connection between low self-esteem and depression is an individual's failure to live up to his standards.

### **Genetic Influence**

Some people have postulated that low self-esteem can be inherited (Emler, 2001). Froggatt (2005) lends voice to this position when he posited that a person's system is the product of both biological inheritance and learning through life.

### **Improving Self Esteem**

To improve one's self-esteem, Harter (1989) observes that one must identify the causes of self-esteem, experience emotional support and approval, make achievements, and develop coping skills. Invariably, one who lacks these is likely to have low self-esteem. According to Myers (2002), to make people feel better about themselves, we should first make them feel more attractive. Carl Rogers (Santrock 2000) holds that even when an individual's behavior falls below expectation, people still need to show that individual love, as well as value and accept him or her as a person. One should be able to say to another: "I may not like your behavior, yet I accept you, value you, and care about you as a person." This builds the other's self-esteem.



## **SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Sin is first and foremost an offense against God. It is a rupture of communion with him. At the same time, sin destroys communion with the Church and the society. For this reason, conversion entails both God's forgiveness and reconciliation with the Church. These levels of reconciliation are expressed and accomplished liturgically by the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation which is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. Chapter two, article four of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation begins with these very words: "Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labours for their conversion." In simpler words, the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation restores that severed relationship between an individual and God and between that individual and members of the sociological community. This Sacrament is known by several names: Penance, Confession, Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Conversion (Catechism, 2002). Through this sacrament, one renounces evil and

gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life.

Going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation presupposes interior repentance which calls for a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed. It also entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of his grace. Lamentations 5:21 reads "Restore us to thyself, O LORD, that we may be restored!" God gives us the strength to begin anew (Catechism, 2002). The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation offer us a whole newness of life, beginning, integrity, self-esteem. The Sacred Scriptures is awashed with so many instances of mercy and newness (cf. Bible: Lk.7:47-50; Jn.8:1-11).

How sin and moral transgression debase us is typified in the parable of the Prodigal Son (cf. Bible: Lk.15:11-24). The younger of two brothers requested for his share of his inheritance even while the father was still alive. He took all he had and left the father and brother to a far country where he squandered everything in his supposed unlimited freedom and thereafter began to live in squalor. The Jewish youngman would even condescend to not just feeding pigs, but also longing to eat the husks the pigs eat. He was humiliated by his transgressions.



This is how sin and moral transgression debase us, according to the teaching of the Catholic Church. However, the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation afford us the opportunity of restoration to newness, integrity, and esteem. This is evident in the second half of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The prodigal son realised his current statute and sought repentance and forgiveness. He returned home to the extended waiting arms of his loving father who cuddled him in warm, loving embrace, changed his tattered cloth for a beautiful robe, put a ring on his finger, sandals on his feet, and prepared a festal banquet. These gestures by the father are symbols of that new life of integrity and esteem, a life of restoration, of worth. The prodigal son was restored to the father and to the household and his position as son retained (not as slave as he had wished).

### **Christ, the Sacrament, and the Catholic Church**

Only God can forgive sins (cf. Bible: Mk.2:7). Scriptures teach that Jesus, the Son of God, has authority on earth to forgive sins and exercises this divine power: “Your sins are forgiven” (Bible: Mk.2:5, 10; Bible: Lk.7:48). The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation and thus, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men and commissions them to exercise this power in his name (cf. Bible:

Jn.20:21-23). Christ has willed that in her prayer and life and action his whole Church should be the sign and instrument of the forgiveness and reconciliation that he acquired for us at the price of his blood. However, the Catholic Church teaches that the exercise of the power of absolution is entrusted to the apostolic ministry, to the priestly ministers in line with the apostolic succession.

In imparting to his apostles his own power to forgive sins, the Lord also gives them the authority to reconcile sinners with and reintegrate them into the Church. This ecclesial dimension of their task is so expressed in Christ's words to Simon Peter when he said I give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven to bind and to loosen, to forgive and to retain (cf. Bible: Mt.16:19; Mt.18:18; Mt.28:16-20).

### **The Structure of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation**

The structure of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation comprises of two equally essential elements: on the one hand, the acts of the penitents which include contrition, confession, and satisfaction, and on the other hand, God's action through the intervention of the Church (absolution). “*Penance requires the sinner to endure all things willingly, be contrite of heart, confess with the lips, and practice complete humility and fruitful satisfaction*” (Catechism, 2002). Contrition is sorrow of the soul and



detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again. The confession (or disclosure) of sins, even from a simply human point of view, frees us and facilitates our reconciliation with others. Through such an admission man looks squarely at the sins he is guilty of, takes responsibility for them, and thereby opens himself again to God and to the communion of the Church in order to make a new future possible.

Many sins wrong our neighbor and as such, one must do what is possible to amend the harm (e.g., return stolen goods, restore the reputation of someone slandered, pay compensation for injuries). It is said that simple justice requires as much. But sin also injures and weakens the sinner himself as well as his relationships with God and neighbor. Even though absolution takes away sin, it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. Thus, raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin: he must “make satisfaction for” or “expiate” his sins. This satisfaction is also called “*penance*” (Catechism, 2002).

The Sacrament of penance and reconciliation has the efficacy of indispensability: the absolution by the Priest (referred to as the ‘*form*’ of the sacrament) and the three acts of the penitent which are the Contrition,

Confession of sins and an intention to change from the old way (referred to as the ‘*matter*’ of the sacrament). The Catholic Church teaches that the Sacrament of Reconciliation be approached with a contrite heart. To receive forgiveness, one is required to be contrite. One is required to recall and detest ones’ sins as sin debases us.

Forgiveness of sin does not reside in the confessor. The confessor or priest minister is only but a servant. Each priest minister, given the delicacy and greatness of this ministry and the respect due to persons, is bound by under very severe penalties to keep absolute secrecy with respect to matters learned in the confessional. This secret, which admits of no exceptions, is called the “*sacramental seal,*” because what the penitent has made known to the priest remains “*sealed*” by the sacrament. This seal is inviolable. Accordingly, it is absolutely wrong for a confessor in any way to betray the penitent, for any reason whatsoever, whether by word or in any other fashion. A priest who breaks this confessional seal is excommunicated. The confessor cannot make use of knowledge that confession gives him about penitents' lives (Beal, Coriden, & Green, 2000).

### **Frequency of Reception**

Frequent reception of the sacrament is recommended, although Catholics who have attained the age of discretion are



required to confess serious sins at least once a year (Beal, Coriden, & Green, 2000). Confession of even venial sin, while not strictly required, is “*strongly recommended by the Church*” (Catechism, 2002). Frequent reception has been recommended by the Popes. According to Venerable Pope Pius XII and Pope Saint John XXIII, “*We particularly recommend the pious practice of frequent confession, which the Church has introduced, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, as a means of swifter daily progress along the road of virtue.*” Blessed Pope Paul VI said that frequent confession is “*of great value.*”

Pope Saint John Paul II went weekly to confession and stressed the universal call to holiness. He strongly recommended this practice of frequent reception of the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. He enumerated the following as advantages of frequent confession: renewed fervor, strengthened in our resolutions, and supported by divine encouragement. Based on the teachings of the Popes and saints (St. Alphonsus, St. John Bosco, St. Pius X, St. Joseph Cafasso, and St. Padre Pio), a frequency between once a month and once a week is recommended. St. Philip Neri says that frequent confession is the cause of great good to the soul, because it purifies it, heals it, and confirms it in the service of God. The Catholic Church teaches that the practice of frequent

confession becomes a powerful means of growing in love with God, in holiness, in humility.

### **The Effects of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation**

Sin robs us of our self-worth. The sacrament effects spiritually and socially on the penitent: the penitent is reconciled with the church, receives healing of mind and soul, and experiences great relief and the healing love of God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation restores this self-worth debased by sin.

According to the Catholic Church’s teaching, locus in the sacrament of Penance is the power to restore us to God’s grace and to join us with him in an intimate friendship. Thus, one effect of the sacrament is to reconcile us to God. There are other effects which include peace, serenity, and consolation. For those who receive the sacrament of Penance with contrite heart and religious disposition, reconciliation “*is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation.*” Indeed, the Sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true “*spiritual resurrection,*” restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God (Catechism, 2002)



Another effect of this sacrament is that it reconciles us with the Church, to others, and to self. Sin damages or even breaks fraternal communion. The sacrament of Penance repairs or restores it. In this sense, it does not simply heal the one restored to ecclesial communion but has also a revitalizing effect on the life of the Church which suffered from the sin of one of her members. This reconciliation with God leads, as it were, to other reconciliations, which repair the other breaches caused by sin. The forgiven penitent is reconciled with himself in his inmost being, where he regains his own true identity. He is reconciled with his brethren whom he has in some way offended and wounded. He is reconciled with the Church. He is reconciled with all creation (JohnPaul II, 1984).

## **YOUTHS**

Self-esteem basically remains same for children. However, self-esteem begins to decline during adolescence especially for females. Some researchers link this to the female's perception of her body's image decline and other problems associated with puberty. For this reason and others, it had been said that adolescent males generally have a higher self-esteem than adolescent females (Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling, & Potter, 2002). Nonetheless, there is no significant difference in self-esteem

between males and females neither in adolescence nor adulthood, according to the American Psychological Association.

Adolescence is a time of great change for young people: physical, cognitive, social/emotional and interpersonal changes. Factors external of the home also contribute to influence youth during this period in such strong ways: environmental, cultural, religious, school, and media factors. As Piaget noted, the stage of youth is one of marked by the developmental ability to engage in abstract thinking, propositional thought and hypothetico-deductive reasoning. Capacity for contemplative thought is also developed during this period. Cognitively, they are better able to conceptualize and reflect upon their own thoughts, feelings, beliefs, intentions, and motivations and those of other people.

The period of youth is one that is also characterised by the formation of a personal ideology or a philosophy of life that can serve to give some direction to the individual in making choices and guiding behavior. To help establish a positive and healthy identity, the youth must be a commitment to a system of values - religious beliefs, vocational goals, a philosophy of life

One important part of adolescence is the discovering of or developing of one's own identity. Otto Rank says that a crucial aspect of personality development occurs during the transition from



childhood to adolescence: the change from dependence to independence. According to G. Stanley Hall (1916), adolescence which begins with the onset of puberty is marked by a period of *Sturm und Drang*, storm and stress. According to him, this period is characterized by idealism, commitment to a goal, revolt against the old, expression of personal feelings, passion and suffering. In his book, *Feelings and Psychic Evolution*, he expressed the interplay between contradictory tendencies: “Energy, exaltation, and supernatural activity are followed by indifference, lethargy, and loathing.” They struggle with the qualities of goodness and virtue. They, on the one hand seek space, privacy, while at the same time, are entangled in crushes and friendships. There is the mixed dance between apathy and inertia and with the urge to discover and explore. For Erik Erikson (1968), the identity crisis is the most essential characteristic of adolescence. It is a period in which the young person (adolescent) strives to develop a sense of personal identity and avoid the dangers of role diffusion and identity confusion (Erikson, 1950). This would have to mean that he or she must continuously make an assessment of his or her assets and liabilities and how they are to be used. They seek to understand their origin, carve out their identity even amongst their peers, and project their own future plans.

According to Erikson, young persons depend on social feedback. They become so interested in what others feel or think about them especially from their peers. This too could bring about confusion especially when the impressions of others do not tally with whatever concept of self the individual has about himself or herself. During this period, the adolescent over identifies with his idolized heroes to such extent that he or she shields his or her own identity and presumes theirs. Youths, according to Erikson, rarely identify with their parents during this period and may often rebel against their dominance, their value system, and their intrusion into their private life as they sort to seek their own separate identity distinct from the parents’.

The influence of peer pressure is so strong during this period because of the need to identify while still questing and developing one’s own unique identity. For some young persons, the behavior and values of parents no longer constitute models as they are deemed outmoded when compared with other models presented by the mass media. The young persons identify with the mass media in the projection of certain personalities as role models, heroines, and heroes. Young persons take up various role models. They become particularly image conscious. In creating their identity, they may sometimes rebel against perceived





structures especially structures and authorities they think inhibit their path to self discovery and actualization. They may run into trouble with their parents, teachers, the law, etc. Yet adolescence is also marked with a period of tension and conflict in trying to carve out a unique identity. There is the conflict between personal incline on the one hand and on the other, familial, societal, and religious expectations. When young persons fail to meet these expectations and when there is lack of support especially from family, friends and those who matter in the life of the youth, self-esteem may be impacted negatively. This decline of the self-esteem of adolescence, especially in the sphere of religion and morality, may lead to rejection of the faith doctrine or quest for a reunion or reconnection with one's own nurtured faith.

### **ATTITUDE**

Attitudes could be defined as evaluations of ideas, events, objects, or people. An attitude is “a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols” (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005). It is “a *psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor*” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Generally, attitudes could be positive or negative, but they can also be

uncertain at times. For example, sometimes we have mixed feelings about a particular issue or person. Regardless, attitudes help determine what we do.

Attitude has got three components. These components are represented in what is called the ABC model of attitudes: **A**ffective, **B**ehavioral, and **C**ognitive. In other words, attitudes are affectively-based, behaviorally-based, and cognitively-based. The affective component refers to the emotional reaction (e.g., fear) one has toward an attitude object (e.g., Cockroaches). It refers to how the object, person, issue or event makes you feel. The behavioral component refers to the way one behaves (e.g., scamper for safety) when exposed to an attitude object (e.g., Cockroaches). It refers to how the attitude influences your behavior. The cognitive component refers to the thoughts and beliefs one has about an attitude object: e.g., cockroaches are gross. It refers to your thoughts and beliefs about the subject. Attitudes can stem from each of these components. Although every attitude has these three components, any particular attitude can be based on one component more than another.

### **Attitudes: Explicit vs. Implicit**

Attitude can exist at two different levels: Explicit and Implicit levels. Explicit attitudes are attitudes that



are at the conscious level, are deliberately formed and are easy to self-report. On the other hand, implicit attitudes are attitudes that are at the unconscious level, are involuntarily formed and are typically unknown to us (Long-Crowell, 2014).

Both implicit and explicit attitudes could sometimes contradict each other. Prejudice is a frequently used example. For instance, I may strongly believe that all people regardless of race, ethnic group or religious affiliation are equal and despise any kind of racial bias yet remain unaware that I get worked up whenever I am around people from Benin Kingdom. My getting worked up may be due to my previous unsavory encounter with someone from the Benin Kingdom.

### **Measuring Explicit and Implicit Attitudes**

A variety of methods have been created to measure both explicit and implicit attitudes. Self-reporting and observation are the two most common methods to determine explicit attitudes since explicit attitudes are known to the subject and can be observed by an outsider. One advantage for both methods is the ease of data collection. However, neither measure is infallible as each subject may not be highly self-aware and honest (even though self-reporting may seem to be mostly accurate).

Since the implicit attitude is unknown to the subject, measuring

implicit attitudes becomes much more difficult than measuring explicit attitudes. One popular method of determining implicit attitudes is the Implicit Association Test (IAT), in which subjects quickly categorize words or pictures, and the results are used to determine automatic associations between concepts and attributes.

### **Influence of Attitude on Behavior**

It has been found by social psychologists that attitudes and actual behavior are not always perfectly aligned. Behavior does not always reflect attitudes. However, researchers have discovered that people are more likely to behave according to their attitudes under certain conditions:

- When your attitudes are the result of personal experience.
- When you are an expert in the subject.
- When you expect a favourable outcome.
- When the attitudes are repeatedly expressed.
- When you stand to win or lose something due to the issue.

In some cases, people may actually alter their attitudes in order to better align them with their behavior. Cognitive dissonance is a phenomenon in which a person experiences psychological distress due to conflicting thoughts or beliefs. In order to reduce this tension, people may change their attitudes to



reflect their other beliefs or actual behaviors (Cherry, 2014).

### **Attitude Change**

Even though attitudes are unique to each person and mostly internal, they are socially influenced and shaped by the behavior of other people. Our attitudes toward things can be influenced by other people. The Elaboration Likelihood Model helps us explain how attitudes are formed and changed through persuasion. The Elaboration Likelihood Model explains two ways in which persuasive communication can cause attitude change: central route (content based) and peripheral route (superficial based). As a theory, it helps indicate when people are more likely to be influenced by the content of persuasive communication (what the speaker says) rather than by superficial characteristics (attractiveness or fame of the speaker), and vice versa.

The central route to persuasion is when people elaborate on a persuasive argument, listening carefully and thinking about the logic behind the message. There are times when people are motivated to pay attention to the facts during a speech or other persuasive communication and during those times are persuaded the most by a strong logical argument. If a person believes the persuasion of the speaker to be reliable, convincing and well-constructed, such

person will typically be receptive to a change in attitude that is long-lasting.

The peripheral route to persuasion, refers to a situation wherein people do not elaborate on a persuasive argument and instead are swayed by surface characteristics that are peripheral to the message. When using this route, peripheral cues enable the individual to use mental shortcuts, accepting or rejecting the argument based on superficial factors instead of actively thinking about the issue. Attitude change resulting from the peripheral route is typically temporary and susceptible to additional change.

Motivation and ability are the two factors that determine which route to persuasion someone takes. Having both motivation and the ability lead to the central route. Not having either motivation or the ability to pay attention may lead to the peripheral.

### **FRONTEIRS OF EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

Kling, Hyde, Showers, and Buswell (1999) conducted two analyses to examine sex differences in global self-esteem. In analysis I, a computerized literature search yielded 216 effect sizes, representing the testing of 97,121 respondents. The overall effect size was 0.21, a small difference favouring males. A significant quadratic effect of age indicated that the largest effect emerged



in late adolescence ( $d = 0.33$ ). In analysis II, gender differences were examined using 3 large, nationally representative data sets from the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES). All of the NCES effect sizes, which collectively summarize the responses of approximately 48,000 young Americans, indicated higher male self-esteem ( $d$ s ranged from 0.04 to 0.24). Taken together, the two analyses provide evidence that males score higher on standard measures of global self-esteem than females, but the difference is small. Powell (2004) opined that self-esteem is at its lowest point in adolescence. Those who have low self-esteem often have little confidence in their abilities. They also question their self-worth.

Nugent, Robert (2011) looked at this sacrament's influence on children in college. Students were asked to prioritize 10 reasons for their non-participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Accordingly, he found out that 20 students said they felt "more comfortable" speaking anonymously to a priest, rather than face-to-face, while 11 indicated some fear that the priest would be "*angry, disappointed, or harsh.*" Also, 11 said it had been "*a long time since their last confession*" and could not remember everything. Also, Atindanbila, Dogodzi, and Nayembi (2012) did a research work on Age, Gender, Position of leadership and Knowledge as they

affect attitude to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In that work, they came out with the finding that females show more significant positive attitude to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### Hypothesis

1. There will be no significant difference between highly self-esteemed and lowly self-esteemed young catholics on their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation.
2. There will be no significant difference between young catholic males and females with regards to their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation.
3. There will be no significant interaction effect between gender and self-esteem of young catholics on their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### METHOD

#### Participants

160 participants were randomly selected amongst the members of the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria across the Catholic Churches in the diocese of Enugu, Nigeria. The diocese of Enugu has 6 deaneries. To give each deanery and subsequently parishes equal opportunity of being selected for this survey work, names of each deanery were written on a paper and randomly drawn.



Two deaneries were eventually selected: Enugu Deanery and Nkwo – Nike Deanery. Enugu Deanery has 48 parishes and 3 chaplaincies, while Nkwo – Nike Deanery has 24 parishes and 1 chaplaincy. Again, having written out the names of the parishes for each of the selected deaneries and balloted separately, 11 parishes from Enugu Deanery and 5 parishes from Nkwo – Nike Deanery were eventually randomly selected. From each of these randomly selected parishes from the randomly selected deaneries, a pool of 160 youths was used for this survey. 15 copies of the questionnaires were distributed in each of these parishes. Afterwards, they were filled and returned. Only the completed and properly filled questionnaires were used in the final analysis.

The participants consist of 64 males (40%) and 96 females (60%). Participants' ages range from 18 to 35 years with a mean age of 24.39 and a standard deviation of 8.55. This age range was chosen in line with the constitution of the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria established in 1985 by the Catholic Bishop Conference of Nigeria as an umbrella body that caters for all catholic youths. It is in consistent with United Nations as well as the African Youth Charter's youth age bracket categorization.

### **Procedure**

The researchers met first with the Monsignor, Parish Priests, and Chaplains of youth with a letter of introduction given to him by his supervisor which they approved (see appendix 1). Having obtained informed consent to further the research in the selected parishes, announcement was made in the Church during Mass to create awareness beforehand. The researcher then proceeded to meet with the Youth Presidents, Youth Leaders, and Catechists for further explanation and also pleaded with them to assist him in the administration and collection of the filled questionnaires from the participants. The researchers educated and trained the youth leaders and catechists who assisted him. The distribution of the questionnaires took place during the meeting days of the youth. 240 copies of the questionnaires were produced with the intention to reach 200 participants. The researchers attached dictionary words at the back page of the Index of Self-Esteem scale to explain certain words, phrases or expressions that may not be easily understood. The distribution and collection of the questionnaires lasted for four weeks. Eventually, 186 copies of the questionnaires were collected and returned. Out of the 186 copies returned, only 160 were properly filled and



completed and their data were used in the final analysis.

### **Instruments**

Two standardized and valid instruments were used in the study namely; “Index of Self-Esteem Scale (ISE)” and “Attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation Scale (ATSOR)”. The ISE and ATSOR questionnaires are attached as appendices 2 and 3. The two scales were compiled in one questionnaire but divided into sections with “A” representing the demographic data, “B” contains self-esteem scale while section “C” contained attitude to sacrament of reconciliation scale.

### **Index of Self-Esteem Scale (ISE)**

The Index of Self-Esteem Scale was originally developed by Hudson (1982) in the USA and it was validated for use in Nigeria by Onighaiye in 1996 (Omoluabi, 1997). Index of self-esteem scale is a 25-item inventory that has both direct and reverse scoring methods. Scoring was done on a five-point likert scale ranging from rarely or none of the time as 1 to most or all of the time as 5. In coding the items, 1 is the lowest score while 5 is the highest score for the directional scoring whereas for inverse scoring, 1 becomes the highest score (5) while 5 becomes the lowest score (1). The items that have direct scoring are 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, and 24. The other items

that have the reverse scoring are 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 18, 21, 22, 23, and 25. To obtain the overall score of an individual, the total direct score items are add to the total reverse score items. To obtain his/her ISE score, 25 was subtracted from the overall score. Thus,  $ISE = (\text{Total Direct Score Items} + \text{Total Reverse Score Items}) - 25$ . Hudson (1982) provided the original psychometric properties for the American samples while Onighaiye provided the psychometric properties for the Nigerian samples. With respect to norms, the American samples have a mean score of 30 from a population of 1,745 comprising both males and females, while the Nigerian samples have a mean score of 30.89 for males and 32.04 for females from a population of 80 males and females each. On reliability, Hudson obtained a coefficient alpha of .93 and a test-retest coefficient of .92 in America. On validity, Onighaiye obtained the following coefficients of validity by correlating ISE with the stated tests: Concurrent validity with SCL – 90 by Derogatis, Lipman, and Covi (1973) in scale C – Interpersonal sensitivity = .46, scale D – Depression = .38, Discriminant validity with Ego Identity scale (EIS) by Tan, Kendis, Fine, and Porac (1977) = .42. In interpretation, the Nigerian mean scores or norms are the basis for interpreting the scores of participants. Scores higher than the norms indicate that the participants have



low self-esteem. The lower a score is below the norm, the higher the participant's self-esteem.

### **Attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation (ATSOR) Scale**

The second scale called Attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation (ATSOR) was developed by the researchers of this study based on the teaching of the church (Catholicism, 2012; Ezeokana, Nnedum, & Madu, 2019). It is a 24-item inventory all worded with a directional statement and they are directionally scored. Scoring was done on a five-point likert response format ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The items of the questionnaire were carefully picked based on the literature and were criticized and approved by professionals and experts in psychometrics, psychology, and religious professions who assessed both the face and content validity. The questionnaire was rated and an inter-rated score of .743 and an absolute agreement level of .699 were obtained. Thereafter, this scale was subjected to a pilot study using 40 catholic youths from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State. This was made possible with the help of a senior lecturer who administered the questionnaire on the

Catholic students who were present in his lecture. With respect to the norms, a mean score of 60.25 was obtained from this pilot study. In interpretation, the mean scores or norms are the basis for interpreting the scores of participants.

### **Construct Validity – Factor Analysis**

ATSOR scale was originally a 24-item scale that measures the attitude and behavior of young catholics towards the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The ATSOR scale was then subjected to pilot study. The data obtained was subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to determine the metric invariance of the scale. However, the result of exploratory factor analysis yielded four factor solutions with Eigen values greater than one accounting for 76.62% of total variance. However, 2 items of the scale loaded moderately high on more than one dimension/factor and consequently, following the law of the thumb (Kerlinger, 1976), items 18 and 26 were removed.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the ATSOR scale is a 22-item validated measure. Attached as appendix 4 is the factor structure of the ATSOR scale. Further explication of the factor analysis indicated Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy of .487, while Bartlett's test of sphericity of

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<sup>1</sup>In computation, the ATSOR questionnaire was recorded: 1-6 captured the serial number and biodata, while 7-30 captured the statement items.



approximate chi-square measured 380.080 with the commonality measure ranging from .677 and .877 in the current study (see appendix 5). This indicated that the sampling data was adequate. However, further explication of the factor/cluster contributions of each dimension to the ATSOR scale indicated that factor 1, sacramental abhorrence, accounted for 18.8% of the total variance; while factor 2, sacramental adherence, accounted for 13.67% of the total variance; whereas factor 3, priestly impression, accounted for 11.5% of the total variance; and factor 4, undue absenteeism accounted for 9.32% of the total variance (see appendix 6). Therefore, ATSOR is an empirically valid instrument for use in the study.

### **Reliability Measures**

The ATSOR main scale was subjected to Cronbach's alpha measure of internal consistency that yielded an alpha coefficient of .69 for the overall 22 items. It indicated that the ATSOR scale has the reliability index of .69 in this study. In addition, the seven items of factor 1, sacramental abhorrence, yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .76. Also, whereas the four items of factor 2, sacramental adherence, yielded a Cronbach's alpha of

.62, the four items of factor 3, priestly impression, yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .67; finally, factor 4, undue absenteeism which has four items, yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .59. Therefore, ATSOR measure is a reliable scale for use for the study (see appendix 7). The ATSOR is a reliable and valid measure in accordance with psychometric criteria (Ezeokana, Nnedum, Ezeliora, & Madu, 2010; Egwu, & Nnedum, 2004)

### **Design and Statistics**

A randomized survey design was adopted for this study. The study has as its independent or predictor variables, self-esteem (high and low) and gender (male and female) and the dependent variable - attitudes (positive and negative). As such the appropriate statistics that was adopted for this study was Two – Way Analysis of Variance (Anova).

### **RESULTS**

In this chapter, the data collected from the field were analyzed and the summaries were presented in tables to highlight the findings. The results were presented in the order in which the hypothesis was presented. Below are the results of the field findings.





**4.1 Hypothesis 1:** There will be no significant difference between highly self-esteemed and lowly self-esteemed young catholics on their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**Table1a: Mean and Standard Deviation of Self esteem on ATSOR**

Self Esteem	Mean	SD	n
High Self Esteem	63.78	8.38	77
Low self Esteem	65.86	10.71	83
Total	64.86	9.69	160

**Table 1b: Two – way Analysis of Self-Esteem on ATSOR**

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	ATSOR Total	172.182 <sup>a</sup>	1	172.182	1.845	.176
Intercept	ATSOR Total	671260.332	1	671260.332	7.192E3	.000
EsteemCategory	ATSOR Total	172.182	1	172.182	1.845	.176
Error	ATSOR Total	14747.512	158	93.339		
Total	ATSOR Total	687933.000	160			
Corrected Total	ATSOR Total	14919.694	159			

a. R Squared = .012 (Adjusted R Squared = .005)

Results from tables 1a and 1b above indicate that there is no significant difference between highly self-esteemed (M = 63.78, SD = 8.38, N = 77) and lowly self-esteemed (M = 65.86, SD = 10.71, N = 83) young catholics on attitude to

Sacrament of Reconciliation at F (160) = 1.85, df = 1, p > .05 level of significance. The F-value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis 1 which stated that “there will be no significant difference between highly self-esteemed



and lowly self-esteemed young catholics on their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation” is on the basis of this result accepted and the alternative, rejected. However, the results show that

youth with low self-esteem have more positive attitude to the Sacrament of Reconciliation than youth with high self-esteem.

**Hypothesis 2:** There will be no significant difference between young catholic males and females with regards to their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**Table 2a: Table of Mean and Standard Deviation of Gender on ATSOR**

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
<b>ATSOR Total</b>	Male	66.1875	9.66728	64
	Female	63.9688	9.64796	96
	Total	64.8562	9.68682	160

**Table 2b: Two – way Analysis of Gender on ATSOR**

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	ATSOR Total	189.037 <sup>a</sup>	1	189.037	2.028	.156
Intercept	ATSOR Total	650520.938	1	650520.938	6.977E3	.000
Gender	ATSOR Total	189.037	1	189.037	2.028	.156
Error	ATSOR Total	14730.656	158	93.232		
Total	ATSOR Total	687933.000	160			
Corrected Total	ATSOR Total	14919.694	159			

a. R Squared = .013 (Adjusted R Squared = .006)



Results from tables 2a and 2b above indicate that there is no significant difference between young catholic males (M = 66.19, SD = 9.67, N = 64) and females (M = 63.97, SD = 9.65, N = 96) on attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation at  $F(160) = 2.03$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > .05$  level of significance. The F-value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, on the basis of the result, the null hypothesis 2 which stated that “there will be no significant difference between males and females with regards to their attitude to

Sacrament of Reconciliation” is accepted and the alternative, rejected. However, the results show that young catholic males have more positive attitude to the Sacrament of Reconciliation than young catholic females.

**Hypothesis 3:** There will be no significant interaction effect between gender and self-esteem of young catholics on their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**Table 3a: Table of Mean and Standard Deviation of Self-Esteem and Gender Interaction on ATSOR**

	Esteem Category	Genders	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
ATSOR Total	High Self-Esteem	male	65.9130	8.50622	23
		female	62.8704	8.24403	54
		Total	63.7792	8.38486	77
	Low Self-Esteem	male	66.3415	10.36004	41
		female	65.3810	11.14418	42
		Total	65.8554	10.70916	83
	Total	male	66.1875	9.66728	64
		female	63.9688	9.64796	96
		Total	64.8562	9.68682	160



**Table 3b: Two – way Analysis of Self-Esteem and Gender Interaction on ATSOR**

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	ATSOR Total	340.651 <sup>a</sup>	3	113.550	1.215	.306
Intercept	ATSOR Total	615838.600	1	615838.600	6.590E3	.000
Esteem_Category	ATSOR Total	78.385	1	78.385	.839	.361
Genders	ATSOR Total	145.426	1	145.426	1.556	.214
Genders * Esteem_Category	ATSOR Total	39.342	1	39.342	.421	.517
Error	ATSOR Total	14579.043	156	93.455		
Total	ATSOR Total	687933.000	160			
Corrected Total	ATSOR Total	14919.694	159			

a. R Squared = .023 (Adjusted R Squared = .004)

Results from tables 3a and 3b above indicate that there is no significant interaction effect between gender and self-esteem on attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation at  $F(160) = .42$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > .05$  level of significance. The F-value is greater than 0.05. Therefore, on the basis of the result, the null hypothesis 3 which stated that “there will be no significant interaction effect between gender and self-esteem of young catholics on their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation” is accepted and the alternative, rejected.

However, young catholic males with low self-esteem ( $M = 66.34$ ,  $SD = 10.36$ ,  $N = 41$ ) have more positive attitude to the Sacrament of Reconciliation than young catholic males with high self-esteem ( $M = 65.91$ ,  $SD = 8.51$ ,  $N = 23$ ), females with low self-esteem ( $M = 62.87$ ,  $SD = 8.24$ ,  $N = 54$ ), and females with low self-esteem ( $M = 65.38$ ,  $SD = 11.14$ ,  $N = 42$ ).

### DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results obtained from the data analysis presented



in the previous chapter. This research was carried out to investigate the following:

1. whether there will be any significant difference between highly self-esteemed and lowly self-esteemed young catholics on their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation;
2. whether there will be any significant difference between males and females with regards to their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation;
3. whether there will be any significant interaction effect between gender and self-esteem of young catholics on their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### **Discussion of Hypothical Findings**

The first hypothesis which stated that there will be no significant difference between highly self-esteemed and lowly self-esteemed young catholics on their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation was confirmed in the research findings. However, it was observed that young catholics with low self-esteem receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation more than those with high self-esteem, even though the difference is not significant. This seems to support the teaching and belief that the Sacrament of Reconciliation restores self-worth and brings about catharsis (relief). Regardless of whether one is high or low on self-esteem, about 87.4% of the participants

said they feel relieved after each sacramental confession. Sin wounds us and weighs on us Guilt and the burden of conscience. Ordinarily, one seeks peace and tranquility both within oneself and in one's relationship with others. Thus, even though psychologically, low self-esteemed persons are more prone to depression and to the burden of guilt than high self-esteemed persons, this quest for peace, tranquility, and release from the burden of guilt is such that it is common to both highly and lowly self-esteemed catholic youth. This, therefore, may have accounted for why there was no significant difference in attitude to the Sacrament of Reconciliation between highly and lowly self-esteemed catholic youths.

The Catholic Church teaches that the Sacrament of Reconciliation heals the wound of sin, sets one free from the yoke of guilt, and restores our robbed dignity. Man prizes his self-worth. The crave for moral and religious self-worth and peace with God, man, and oneself may account for why there was no significant difference between catholic youths of both high and low self-esteem in their attitude toward the Sacrament of Reconciliation (even though the latter show more positive attitude). This is so because both catholic youths of low self-esteem and high self-esteem prize highly their self-worth and would do what it takes to restore and preserve it. The



Sacrament of Reconciliation offers one this whole newness of life, beginning, integrity, self-esteem.

The second hypothesis stated that there will be no significant difference between males and females with regards to their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation. Also, results from the preceding chapter confirmed this hypothesis. Atindanbila, Dogodzi, and Nayembi (2012) did a research work on Age, Gender, Position of leadership and Knowledge as they affect attitude to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In that work, they came out with the finding that females show more significant positive attitude to the Sacrament of Reconciliation than males. This, however, is inconsistent with the result gathered from my research on young catholics within the diocese of Enugu wherein there existed no significant difference between genders. It was observed that although more males showed more positive attitude to this sacrament than females, there was no significant difference in gender on attitude to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. That there is no significant difference in genders attitude toward the Sacrament of Reconciliation is pretty interesting as there has been the conception that females are more religious than males. This, in large part, is due to the number of females in religious activities. Also, there has

equally been the conception that more females frequent the Sacrament of Reconciliation than males. This may be true in terms of simple number, but per ratio or mean (as based on this research), it can be easily observed that males register more presence at sacramental confession than females. However, this difference is insignificant.

Cultural differences may have accounted for this disparity in both works. The Nigerian cultural setting is a very religious one. Nigerians are very religious persons. That there is no significant difference in gender to the attitude of youth could possibly be as a result of the religious setting we find ourselves even from birth. Fervent catholic families provide the religious environment wherein faith is nurtured and nourished. Both males and females are taught religious values from tender ages. Parents take or sometimes ask their children to go for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These parents, sometimes, model this attitude themselves by going to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Be that as it may, it goes without further saying that the need for God, the quest for self-worth and soothing peace is one both common to young catholic males and females.

Another reason may be because of the level of participation of both genders in their various religious organizations. Most of the Catholic Youth



Organizations within the diocese of Enugu are headed by males. I think the high level of religious instructions and activities account for the no significant difference between males and females in their attitudes toward the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Thus, religious background, conscious, and education played a key role herein.

One effect of the sacrament is to reconcile us to God. There are other effects which include peace, serenity, and consolation. For those who receive the sacrament of Penance with contrite heart and religious disposition, reconciliation “is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation.” This state of peace and balance, biologically, may be likened to homeostasis wherein the body creates a state of body fluid equilibrium. Indeed, the Sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true “spiritual resurrection,” restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God (Catechism, 2002). This quest for restoration and peace coupled with the family religious background may possibly explain why there is no significant difference in gender with respect to the attitude of youth to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Sometimes, parents and caregivers withhold love and praise unless an individual conforms to parental and

social standards (termed conditional positive regard). Studies indicate that social rejection lowers how people relate to self and to others (Myers, 2002). To draw out the best from people and to reassure them, one should first make them feel more attractive. If there is one place they find social acceptance, it is ensured within the loving invitation and encounter of a God present in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In her teaching and ministry, the Catholic Church presents a God who does not reject us but offers unconditional acceptance and love to penitents. She offers the means of pardon and reconciliation. Thus, regardless of gender, people do need support and encouragement in order to rise and blossom (Passer and Smith, 2001). This may account for why there is no significant difference between young catholic males and females in their attitude towards the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Here within the Sacrament of Reconciliation, young catholics encounter and experience a God who loves them nonetheless and offers them mercy and restoration. Carl Rogers (Santrock 2000) holds that even when an individual’s behavior falls below expectation, people still need to show that individual love, as well as value and accept him or her as a person. One should be able to say to another: “*I may not like*



*your behavior, yet I accept you, value you, and care about you as a person.”*

I think another possible reason why young catholics do not differ significantly in gender with respect to their attitude towards the Sacrament of Reconciliation is because they compare self and way of life with certain known and established standards of living as expressed by the church of which they are members. According to the Socio-Meter theory, one could pursue or display certain attitude not for its own sake, but for the quest for a relational relevance. In other words, certain attitude functions to reflect the extent of one's own inclusion or fitness for inclusion in a social group (Leary and Baumeister, 2000). Thus, one's attitude is based on whatever is in keeping with the basic norm or acceptability of a particular group to which an individual belongs. Young catholics, regardless of gender, realizing that they have fallen below faith and moral standard, may, therefore, seek to re-establish communion with the faith community. I also believe that one does not just strive to attain just the goal of an organization, but one's own as well. This is the thrust of the Self-Enhancement theory. From this perspective, young catholics, in respective of gender, do not just seek to re-establish communion with the faith community, but also to enhance self as well. Thus, reconciliation and restoration is achieved on both levels:

societal and personal. In simpler words, the Sacrament of Reconciliation restores that severed relationship between an individual and God and between that individual and members of the sociological community. It also entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of his grace.

Lastly, findings as stated in chapter four confirmed the third hypothesis which stated that there will be no significant interaction effect between gender and self-esteem of young catholics on their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation. It was observed, however, that although there was no significant interaction effect between gender and self-esteem of young catholics on their attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation, nevertheless, young catholic males with low self-esteem showed more positive attitude to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Amongst the catholic youths of the diocese of Enugu, regardless of esteem worth and gender, faith education and influence of one's family background all contribute in no small measure in underlying why there is no significant difference in interaction between self-esteem and gender on the attitude of young catholics towards the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The American Psychological Association reported that there is no significant difference between men's and women's





self-esteem during either adolescence or adulthood (Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling, & Potter, 2002; Kling, Hyde, Showers, and Buswell, 1999).

## CONCLUSION

From the research conducted, there exists no significant difference between gender and catholic youths' attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation. Self-esteem does not significantly predicate catholic youths' attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation. Finally, there exists no significant interaction between self-esteem and gender on catholic youths' attitude to Sacrament of Reconciliation. However, it was found that males with low self-esteem show more positive attitude to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Young catholic persons develop high self-esteem when parents, caregivers, church ministers communicate to them unconditional acceptance and love, establish clear behavior guidelines and reinforce compliance while at the same time, allowing them freedom to make decisions and express opinions within those guidelines. People need support and encouragement for a boost of their self-esteem. Passer and Smith (2001) also alluded to this. God as a loving Father loves us unconditionally and thus, lovingly goes in search of us to bring us back to the fold. Yes, he detests the sin,

but loves the sinner. People with low self-esteem could draw from this: though sin diminishes us, God's unconditional merciful love restores us to esteem and dignity.

## Limitations of the Study

One of the difficulties faced by this researcher is the non-availability of literature especially of Nigerian literatures or research relevant to this area of research. There seems to be no known study on this area of research within the Nigeria church.

Also, this research work is not exhaustive at least for the following two reasons. First, the Enugu Catholic diocese has 6 deaneries comprising 184 parishes and 5 chaplaincies. The research participants were pulled primarily from only two of these deaneries. Thus, results for this research will be generalized with caution. The results are only indicative rather than conclusive. However, they provide us with insight and platform for further research. More work is still needed in this field especially with a much larger group and bearing in mind that this seems to be the first empirical work on the attitude of catholic youths toward the Sacrament of Reconciliation as determined by self-esteem and gender.

This research was only aimed at looking at how self-esteem and gender predicate attitude to sacramental reconciliation due to the general low



turnout of catholic youth to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I think more research work needs to be conducted on why there seems to be the general decline in the attitude of youth to sacramental reconciliation.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Even though no significant difference was recorded in any of the hypotheses tested, the following recommendations still need to be made. More research work needs to be done in other to have a clearer picture on the relationship between faith and practice as displayed by the catholic youth especially with regards to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Not far-fetched is the influence of Protestantism. Protestants hold and teach that one does not need any sacramental confession to a priest in other to have one's sins forgiven. For them, one could simply cry out to God for mercy in the quiet of one's room for mercy and still receive forgiveness. Thus, for many catholic youths, it is particularly evident that there exists a disconnect between praxis and faith amongst these youths. Thus, it becomes particularly important for the Catholic Church and her ministers to do more in the area of catechesis, faith-classes, retreats and workshops, especially as there exist the disconnect between faith and actual practice as seen from this report.

Also, it was found out in this research that those with low self-esteem show (not by way of any significant difference) more positive attitude to the Sacrament of Reconciliation than those with high self-esteem. These are people already dipped in their assessment of self and struggle under the burden of guilt and sin. It would, therefore, do the penitent no good when added to their already debased self and guilt, bashing and tongue-lashing from the priest minister before or during the Sacrament of Reconciliation. About 79.4% of those encountered in this research reported that the catholic priest is usually gentle and approachable in the administration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In the penitents' quest, therefore, to seek restoration of the abased self and reconciliation with God, the church, and society, the catholic priest ministers must seek to be approachable, reassuring, and gentle with the penitents.

It is most fitting that we take a good look into this sacrament especially as pope Francis intends to declare "The Year of Mercy" come Dec.8, 2015 to end with the liturgical Solemnity of Christ the King on 20 November 2016 (Francis, 2015). Jesus remains, for believing Christians, the face of the Father's mercy. The church invites her children to this balm of mercy, to the visceral loving mercy of the Father. According to Pope Francis, mercy is the very foundation of



the Church's life. Nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church's very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love (Francis, 2015). This desire to show mercy is endless (Francis, 2013). Catholic priests must, therefore, not fail in this commission to announce the mercy of God. The Sacrament of Reconciliation points to this oasis of God's mercy. The Sacrament of Reconciliation becomes a rediscovering path back to the Lord, a source of true interior peace and meaning for the penitent. The Sacrament of Reconciliation must, therefore, be placed at the center once more so as to enable people touch the grandeur of God's mercy with their own hands (Francis, 2013). Catholic priests should never grow weary of being that authentic sign of the Father's mercy. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, they are called to be faithful servants of God's mercy.

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