

SELF-ESTEEM AMONG POOR STUDENTS IN IRAN

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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken to compare the self-esteem of poor- and non-poor Students and to study the effectiveness of behavior intervention in enhancing self-esteem. The study was conducted in two parts. In part 'A', self-esteem of poor and non-poor Students was compared and in part 'B', the effectiveness of behavior intervention in enhancing self-esteem of Students was studied. In part 'A', matched group design was used for the study. The sample of the study comprised two groups of Students: group I comprised 50 poor Students and group II comprised 50 non-poor Students. The result showed significant difference in the self-esteem of poor and non-poor Students. In part 'B', pre and post-design was used. The sample of this part of the study comprised two groups of Students: group I comprised 10 poor and group II comprised 10 non-poor Students, having low self-esteem. The result showed effectiveness of behavior intervention in enhancing self-esteem of both poor and non-poor Students.

KEYWORDS

Non-poor Students, poor Students, behavior, Iran, self-esteem.

INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem (S.E.) is a major key to success in life. S.E. is how we feel about ourselves, and our behavior reflects those feelings. The term S.E. refers to the evaluation a person makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself or herself. James first talked about S.E. in 1890; he described it as a ratio or relationship between our

achievements and our aspirations. The National Association for Self-esteem defined S.E. as, "The experience of being capable of meeting life's challenges and being worthy of happiness". S.E. includes a person's subjective appraisal of himself or herself as intrinsically positive or negative to some degree (Sedikides & Gregg, 2003).

S.E. originates early in life and its structure becomes increasingly elaborate with age. The foundation of S.E. is laid early in life when an infant develops attachment with the adults. When adults readily respond to their cries and smiles, babies learn to feel loved and valued. As young Students learn to trust their parents and others who care for them to satisfy their basic needs they gradually feel wanted, valued, and loved. Our S.E. is very dependent on factors within our environment. It is formed as a result of our years of experiences (especially the early ones). It could be said that one's eyes and ears record the message they receive from others, especially those most important to them. Because one's unconscious accepts all words and emotions as facts no matter how legitimate or based on reality, one's S.E. is being continuously constructed and reconstructed by what is encountered in the mirror of others verbal and non-verbal messages.

A critical factor as an antecedent to one's S.E. is the quality and amount of parental attention and acceptance received as a child (Homey, 1945; Coopersmith, 1967; Parker et al., 2005). One's S.E. is the quality and amount of parental attention and acceptance one received as a child (Loeb et al., 1980; Gordon et al., 1981). Parents' time given to their Students has significant influence on S.E., mastery and educational aspirations of Students. Mothers also have an important role in the development of child's S.E. (Laura et al., 1994; Moos, 1998; Helmut & Martina, 2001). Friends and peers play a significant role in the development of child's S.E. (Bolger, 1997; Eramet et al., 2005). Teacher's messages, skills, knowledge and academic capabilities also influence the development of child's S.E. (Anderman et al., 2001; Daniels et al., 2001; Rascoe, 2002).

Healthy S.E. is a child's armor against the challenges of the world. A person with high S.E. is fundamentally satisfied with the type of person he is; yet he may acknowledge his faults while hoping to overcome them (Rosenberg, 2001). Greater levels of S.E. can affect many aspects of Students' lives, such as improving school performance and efforts toward achieving goals (Guest & Biasini, 2001). People with high S.E. report more positive attitudes, feelings and life satisfaction and less anxiety, hopelessness and depressive symptoms (Crocker & Wolfe, 2002). Students with a healthy sense of S.E. feel that the important adults in their lives accept them, care about them, and would go out of their way to ensure that they are safe and well (Salmond & Fleschman, 2005). On the other hand Students with low S.E. feel that the important adults and peers in their lives do not accept them, do not care about them very much, and would not go out of their way to ensure their safety and well being (Schoenberg, Salmond & Fleschman, 2005). Lower S.E. in childhood can lead to the development of a variety of emotional disturbances and an increased risk of suicide (Thompson, 2005). Low S.E. can actually trigger higher levels of stress, anxiety, sleeplessness and many other health-depriving symptoms (Turner, Kaplan & Badger, 2006). Hence there is a need to raise the S.E. of Students because low S.E. can lead to many psychological problems. There are many possible interventions that can be initiated for Students or adults with low S.E. Considerable evidence indicates that S.E. can be increased, if parents, teachers, or others create an atmosphere characterized by acceptance and freedom from anxiety, which tends to promote and encourage curiosity and exploratory behaviors. Responsive classroom environment is one of them. The central idea behind it is that schools can give Students awareness of their power and help them recognize that it can make a difference in their lives. Even a minimal, short-term interaction with a caring adult can have a positive impact on the development of a child's S.E. (Anderman et al. 2001; Daniels et al. 2001). Cognitive behavior that elicits unpleasant conditions, such as anger and anxiety, can be decreased with cognitive behavior modification procedures. Praise statements or critical statements from others can serve as reinforcements or punishers for behavior change. (Borowski & Muthukrishna, 1995; Larkin & Thyer, 1999). School system may consider having additional, classroom technologies for the purpose (Page, 2000).

OBJECTIVES

The present study was undertaken with the objectives of comparing the S.E. of poor and non-poor Students and to study the effectiveness of behavior intervention in enhancing the S.E. of poor and non-poor Students.

METHOD

The present study was conducted in two parts. In part 'A', self-esteem of poor and non-poor Students was compared and in part 'B' the effectiveness of behavior intervention in enhancing self-esteem of Students was studied. Sample In part 'A' of the study, the sample consisted of two groups. Group I comprised 50 poor Students (25 boys and 25 girls) and group II comprised 50 non-poor Students (25 boys and 25 girls). The age range of these Students is 8-15 years. Poor Students have been selected from the poor ages of Shiraz and Yasouj city. Non-poor Students have been selected from those schools where poor Students are also



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enrolled. In part 'B' of the study 10 poor and 10 non-poor Students having low S.E. were included in the sample. Results of S.E. measures of part 'A' of the study were utilized for selection of the sample in part 'B' of the study.

DESIGN

In part 'A' of the study matched group design (matching by pairs -age, gender, educational level) was used. In part 'B' pre and post-design was used.

MEASURE

Self-esteem Inventory (SEI) was used to measure S.E. of poor and non-poor Students. It has been developed by Coopersmith (1975). Its school form was used in the present research. Retest reliability for the SEI was reported by Coopersmith to be 0.88 and by Bedeian et al. (1977) as 0.80 for males and 0.82 for females. Kokens (1974, 1978) reported and confirmed the SEI's construct validity. In the present study Hindi translation of school form of the measure (done by researcher) was used. The English and Hindi versions showed a correlation of 0.96 ($n = 100$).

PROCEDURE

In part 'A' of the study SEI was administered on the sample of 100 Students (50 poor and 50 non-poor), out of which 20 Students (10 poor and 10 non-poor) having low S.E. were selected for behavior intervention in part 'B' of the study. Initial measures of S.E. of Students served as baseline. Behavior intervention for 2 months was given to Students for the purpose of enhancing their S.E. It included the following steps.

Initially all the teachers teaching the Students were given a list of these Students and were told that these Students had been found having high potential on the basis of intelligence and ability tests. Teachers were requested to give special/extra attention to those Students in the class, encourage them, give them maximum opportunities for participation in the classroom activities and give them proper and immediate feedback on their performance/activities. Parents/guardians of each child were also told that their child has high potential as it has been found on the basis of intelligence and ability tests. They should give extra attention and care to their child, encourage the child by helping, praising and behaving in a friendly manner with the child so that the child can freely express itself. The researcher also met each child at least twice a week and talked to the child about its performance and achievement, and praised and encouraged the child for better results.

The above intervention was continued for two months. After the intervention, the data were again collected on the measure.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

In part 'A' of the study, the S.E. of poor and non-poor Students was compared. To compare the S.E. of poor and non-poor Students, Wilcoxon on-Mann-Whitney test was used. The results are presented in result table-1.

It can be observed from table 1 that the value of z is -6.44. The observed value of -6.44 exceeds the critical value of 2.58 at $\alpha = 0.01$. Thus, the obtained value of z is significant at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore, we accept the hypothesis that poor Students have lower self-esteem than non-poor Students.

In part 'B' of the study,

Result Table-1: Value of z , and Critical Value of z , at 0.01 Level of Significance

Groups	N	z	Level of Significance	Critical Value
poor	50	-6.44	0.01	2.58
Non-poor	50			

Result Table-2: Value of 'T' for Both Groups

Groups	N	Sum of ranks with positive signs	Sum of ranks with negative signs	T	
poor	10	55	0	0	
Non-poor	10	55	0	0	

Wilcoxon on Test was applied to see the significance of difference between pre and post-measures of self-esteem of poor and non-poor Students. Results are presented in Result table - 2.

It can be observed from table 2 that $T = 0$. According to Appendix Table, with $N = 10$ subjects, T must be less than or equal to 5 (on one-tail test at $\alpha = 0.01$) in order to accept the hypothesis. $T_{\text{observed}} (0)$ for both groups is less than the table value of T . So we conclude that behavior intervention is effective in enhancing S.E. of poor as well as non-poor Students

It is indicated in fig. 1 (showing pre and post-intervention scores of poor Students) and 2 (showing pre and post-intervention scores of non-poor Students) that results are not only statistically significant but are also clinically significant. The statistical significance represents that behavior intervention is effective in the enhancement of self-esteem, while the clinical significance is helpful in accepting the hypothesis and is representative of the fact that behavior intervention is effective not only in one particular individual case but in case of all who have low self-esteem.

DISCUSSION

Results of part 'A' of the study showed that poor Students have lower S.E. than non-poor Students. The Students who have both their parents and are living with them in a family atmosphere of love, care and security have higher S.E. than the poor Students, living in an poor age. Parents play an important role in building and development of a child's S.E. An poor child remains devoid of parental love, care and protection, which affect the development of child's S.E. Love, warmth and acceptance by parents have been determined to be extremely important in terms of developing a high degree of S.E. Students who did not receive parental love and acceptance tend to develop low levels of S.E. (Kernis et al., 2000). Parental rejection or disapproval produces sharp declines in participant's S.E.; these effects occurred regardless of their initial S.E. level (Leary, Haupt, Strausser & Chokel, 2002) and regardless of whether they themselves acknowledged that their S.E. depended on others (Leary et al., 2003). Adoptee Students had low S.E. and are at higher risk of developing severe mental health problems and social maladjustment than Students of the same age living with their biological families in the general population (Mohanty et al., 2006). The quality and amount of parental love, attention and acceptance is the critical factor as an antecedent to one's S.E. Therefore poor Students who remain devoid of parental love, attention and acceptance tend to develop low levels of S.E. The result of part 'B' of the study revealed that there is significant increase in the S.E. of poor and non-poor Students after intervention. These results indicated that behavior intervention is effective in enhancing S.E. of Students. Low S.E. has been identified as a risk factor for aggression, delinquency, depression, poor school performance and so forth. Hence there is a need to enhance S.E. of Students. Enhancement of S.E. among Students is of great importance from individual as well as social point of view. The important way is to boost people's S.E. by accepting and approving of them. Parents, teachers or others must create an atmosphere characterized by acceptance and freedom from anxiety so that Students may learn to honor their strength and maintain their high S.E. Building S.E. in Students requires collaboration between parents, school personnel and the child (Elliot & Dweck, 1998; Pomerantz & Saxon, 2001).

One way to experience high S.E. would be to rethink what is important. When people follow their actual strengths rather than some standard given to them by society, their parents or their peers, they begin to develop high S.E. When other people appreciate their skills, it can result in a rapid improvement in S.E.

This study suggests that teachers and parents can provide individualized support for Students's progress and create an atmosphere that sends a clear message that all pupils can learn, and improve their performance and behavior particularly self-esteem.

CONCLUSION

The result of part 'A' of the study leads to the following conclusion: Poor Students have lower self-esteem than non-poor Students and the result of part 'B' of the study leads to the following conclusion: behavior intervention is effective in enhancing self-esteem of poor as well as non-poor Students. It is possible to change their pessimistic view into an optimistic view, with the help of some intervention strategies.

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