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Relationship Between Self-esteem and Academic Achievement Amongst Pre-University Students

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Abstract: This research highlights the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement in the pre-university students. Additionally, it aimed to identify whether there are differences in academic achievement between boys and girls. The objectives of this study were achieved by using the Coopersmith questionnaire and the students' grade in their current and previous semesters. The random sampling was used for collecting the data and as a consequence 50 male and 50 female were chosen randomly. The questionnaires were distributed amongst 100 students in Qaemshahr schools. The results demonstrated that there was significant ($p < 0.01$) positive relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. Moreover, there was significant difference in academic achievement between boys and girls. However, no significant difference was found in self-esteem between males and females. The results suggest that high self-esteem is important factor and strengthen the prediction of academic achievement in students.

Key words: Self-worth, adolescent, academic achievement, gender

INTRODUCTION

Today's self-esteem as one of the influential factor which affect student's academic achievement has received increasing attention. It has been declared that high self-esteem can lead to high academic achievement. The Self-esteem can be referred as person's global judgments of competency regarding one's self-worth (Harter, 1988). This construct emerges when children compare their self-evaluation with actual performance on a variety of tasks. Moreover, this comparison between the perceived self and the ideal self is very crucial specially during adolescence because adolescents encounter with diversified job of developing and challenges of their own age. Hence, development of self-esteem is considered as one of the most important developmental processes of adolescence (Sirin and Rogers-Sirin, 2004).

In general, high self-esteem help individuals to view themselves as active and capable persons to promote changes through effort and set higher goals which cause learning new things. Interestingly, numerous researchers have demonstrated that the best way to improve student achievement is to increase their self-esteem (Rubie *et al.*, 2004). Research has also documented that high self-esteem plays an important role in academic achievement, social and personal responsibility (Redenbach, 1991). Those who have higher academic

achievement tend to feel more confident in contrast those who lack confidence in themselves achieve less.

Additionally, gender is the important factor which influence on the growth, emerges and demonstration of self-esteem. Numerous differences have been found between males and females in their level of self-esteem during adolescence because they tend to adopt to gender stereotypes. Specifically, male self-esteem are thought to be more impressed by goals characterized by independence and autonomy, while self-esteem in female is more influenced by goals related to interdependence and sensitivity (Cross and Slater, 1995). The difference in self-esteem can lead to difference in academic achievement between boys and girls. It has been revealed that girls do better in school, get higher grades and can graduate from high school at a higher level than boys (Jacob, 2002). Previous study showed the other influential factors in academic achievement (Kara and Kahraman, 2008). However, the present study revealed the important role of self-esteem in academic achievement. In other words, the present study aimed to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement as well as gain insight into the differences in self-esteem and academic achievement between boys and girls. This study endeavored to provide information for educators, counselors and teachers to apply strategies to

prevent imbalance in academic achievement and self-esteem between male and female students in the classroom.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data collection: The population of the current study included all boys and girls attended at pre-university centers of Qaemshahr in 2008-2009 education years. Based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, 100 students selected as a sample size in this study. The random sampling was utilized for this study. By using a table of random numbers, 50 male and 50 female were chosen for the current research.

Measures: The Coopersmith’s standardized questionnaire of self-esteem was utilized which involved 30 questions and each question ranged from 1 (low self-esteem) to 5 (high self-esteem) based on the Likert Scale. Total self-esteem scores range from 30 to 150 (Coopersmith, 1967). The questions were scored in the following way: firstly, the items 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 14, 18, 24, 25, 27, 29 and 30 were coded from 5 to 1; however, it has been given the opposite rates from 1 to 5 for the rest of the questions. Secondly, all the grades were added in order to obtain a total grade as a self-esteem score. Additionally, for the purposes of this study, Academic achievement was measured based on the students’ total score on all subjects which taken in their current and previous semesters. Higher scores showed that the students performed well academically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis testing: The first hypothesis stated that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. Pearson correlation performed to determine if the relationship was statistically

significant. As it has been shown in Table 1, there was positive relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement ($p < 0.01$) and as a consequence, H_1 was supported. In other words, significant findings revealed that students’ level of self-esteem was a significant determinant in their academic achievement. If students develop higher levels of self-esteem, they would exhibit higher academic achievement.

The second hypothesis concerned whether there is significant differences in the level of academic achievement between boys and girls. To test this hypothesis, independent samples t-test was employed. As it has been shown in Table 2, Levene’s test which is related to the assumption of equality of variance was met. Additionally the significant differences were found in the level of academic achievement between boys and girls.

The last hypothesis considered whether there significant difference existed in the levels of self-esteem between boys and girls. To test this hypothesis, independent samples t-test was employed. As it has been shown in Table 3, no significant difference was found in the level of self-esteem between boys and girls.

The current study demonstrated that there is significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement in students and this result is correspondent with the research results of Fathi-Ashtiani *et al.* (2007). Furthermore the finding is consistent with Walter (2003) who indicated that a positive sense of self esteem has been related to the academic achievement. On the other hand, our results has been supported by Bray (2001) who assessed the influence of academic achievement on self-

Table 1: Correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement

Test	Self-esteem	Academic achievement
Self esteem		
Pearson correlation	1	0.387
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
Academic achievement		
Pearson correlation	0.387	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	

Table 2: The difference in academic achievement between girls and boys

Test	Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means			
	F-value	Sig.	Mean difference	Sig.	DF	t-value
Academic achievement						
Equal variances assumed	0.389	0.534	-2.663	0.000	98	-5.256
Equal variances not assumed			-2.663	0.000	97.927	-5.256

Table 3: The difference in self-esteem between girls and boys

Test	Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means			
	F-value	Sig.	Mean difference	Sig.	DF	t-value
Academic achievement						
Equal variances assumed	1.845	0.177	0.880	0.433	98	0.787
Equal variances not assumed			0.880	0.433	96.862	0.787

esteem amongst 64 college students at Missouri Western State University. The results revealed that those students who get higher grades tends to develop higher levels of self-esteem. Additionally, the results supported the findings of Wiggins and Schatz (1994) who found that increases in self-esteem are positively correlated with increases in academic achievement. They exhibited that students' grade point averages boost when they acquired more points on a self-esteem questionnaire. Similarly, the other study demonstrated that experiencing success or failure consistently is extremely important as it affects one's self-esteem and self-concept (Kifer, 1973).

In contradiction with our results, recent studies have shown that the association between these two variables was modest (Pullmann and Allikk, 2008; Nagar *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, an earlier meta-analysis indicated a modest relation of 0.08 between self-esteem and academic achievement (Valentine *et al.*, 2004).

The current study also found that there is not significant difference in the level of self-esteem between boys and girls. However, the significant difference found for academic achievement between male and female students. Academic motivation may be the cause of the difference in academic achievement. This is consistent with previous research which found that gender difference was significant when the influence of motivation on academic achievement was evaluated in male and female students (Tella, 2007). Hence, it can be said that self-esteem of students play an important role in determining their academic achievement. But the differences in academic achievement can be rooted from their motivation instead of their self-esteem between girls and boys.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It could be concluded that school authorities especially counselors and teachers should be aware of the link between self-esteem and academic achievement in students. When the students understand that their failures are a result of effort rather than ability, they will probably exhibit a greater persistence to overcome their failures rather than developing an attitude of helplessness. Teachers must be trained about the strategies which are related to the self-esteem building and have to observe students and their interactions with peers carefully to meet the needs of them.

Additional research needs to be conducted to confirm these findings and to investigate whether they have any implications for working with Iranian students to improve their academic performance. Finally, practical research needs to be done to develop and assess

programs for counselors, teachers and school administrators to use on an individual, in the classroom and on institutional level respectively.

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