

Competitive Nature of School and its Correlation to Adolescent Self-Esteem

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PSYC 3980: Research Design in Psychology

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December 7, 2021

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to figure out if there is a correlation between students' self-esteem and academic performance. We are hypothesizing that a positive self-esteem will improve academic performance. Participants in this study were taken from five middle schools in Woodstock, Georgia. Their age range is from 11 to 14 and have a diverse range of races and languages. During the study, the participants will be sorted randomly into groups and given a survey which consists of 8 questions regarding their feelings about themselves prior to the test booklet. Once finished they will answer the questions in the test booklet which contains 40 questions from four subjects (Math, Science, History, and Literature). The participants will have 5 minutes to answer the survey and 60 minutes to complete the test booklet. We expect that each participant will successfully complete both the survey and test booklet in the time given. If the hypothesis is supported, this study will demonstrate the correlation between academic achievement and self-esteem which allows us to understand how a student's positive self-esteem impacts their performance in school.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Academic Performance, Students, Correlation

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During the early stages of school, we learn about simple math, literature, history, etc. As time progresses, we start to get into the more serious stuff; the alphabet enters math, we are required to learn more vocabulary, and history becomes more complex. This is the time where students start having issues with academics. During this period, we are wondering: what has an effect on student's academics? Many studies answered this question by saying that positive self-esteem improves academic achievement (Ross & Broh, 2000).

There is a lot of pressure trying to obtain a high academic stance. High academic grades are important for many reasons. They are essential to access good educational resources. This includes high quality infrastructures, teachers, and academic atmospheres (Yang & Zhu, 2019). Having these resources could determine the success of a student for a higher education and gaining employment opportunities. Recognizing why students strive for good academics can help people understand the reason students work hard. For some, academic achievement is valued traditionally and performing well is normal. For example, Chinese individuals tend to attach more importance to students' academic achievement than other nations (Yang & Zhu, 2019).

Studies believe that if youth are expected to be successful in a competitive environment that it is essential their academic achievements reflect their abilities and that they have psychological resources on hand (Ciarrochi et al., 2007). At a young age, failure has a big impact on an adolescent's self-esteem. It has been determined as a predictor for well-being and academic performance. Grades are known to cause stress, especially if the student is constantly checking them. It has the power to rewire the brain since the brains of adolescents are still developing. Having high hopes is found to have a positive influence on an adolescent. Hope is defined as a motivational factor that helps push people towards long-term goals. Being able to

plan out goals and achieve them is known as “mental action sequences”. These are known to be the driving forces for an individual’s positive emotions. One known negative affect is multitasking. In research from Luo et al. (2020), it was found that the proportion of adolescents accessing the internet increased drastically from the year 2007 to 2015. It was also found that it negatively affected self-esteem.

Self-esteem is constantly found to be related to peer victimization. A study discovered that it partially mediated the relationship between peer victimization and internalizing problems (Raskauskas et al., 2015). The self-esteem of an adolescent is greatly influenced by peers. Having positive self-esteem helps lessen the negative outcomes from peer victimization. It also is identified to protect against negative mental health. A couple of studies have found that peer victimization has a direct negative relationship with self-efficacy as well. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, and behave and relate to levels of motivation and prediction of future performance (Raskauskas et al., 2015). This includes previous successes, failures, and the student’s interpretation of those performances and feedback received. Only a few studies include both self-esteem and self-efficacy. They are known to be positively correlated together. This means that the possible outcomes of victimization can have negative effects on both self-esteem and self-efficacy.

The present study addresses the correlation of self-esteem and academics of adolescents. Understanding the relation between them will help people better understand how academics impact a child’s well-being. It will also discuss the reasons why students strive for good academics. Learning how certain things impact a child’s self-esteem will help us better understand how to prevent negative impacts on their mental health and also help improve academic grades.

Methods

Participants

The participants, all part of the University of Georgia Study, attend five middle schools in Woodstock, Georgia. The population of the city is approximately 32,234. Twenty participants from each school will be surveyed and tested. The ages of the participants range from 11 to 14 with a mean age of 12.5. These samples represent a diverse range of races and languages.

Apparatus

Each participant will receive a test booklet and a survey. The test booklet will contain four subjects: math, science, history, literature. The survey will have questions based off of how the participants feel before. It will contain questions that relate to self-esteem.

Procedure

We obtained parental and student consent before starting the study. The test booklets and surveys will be given out October 20th during the school day. The participants will be randomly put into different groups and separated into different classrooms. Prior to starting the study, the administrators will explain the survey, the test booklet, and what the process will be. During this, the participants will be asked to put their names on the survey and test booklet prior to starting. Afterwards they will answer questions if there are any. At 1:00 the participants will be given the survey. This survey will have questions asking how they feel prior to the test. This consists of 8 questions and they will have five minutes to answer them. Once the time is up the administrators will collect them. Once the surveys are collected the test booklets will be handed out and the participants will begin once everyone has received a booklet. These booklets contain 40

questions (10 per subject). The participants will have 60 minutes to complete the booklet. Once the time is up the booklets will be collected.

Results

After the surveys and test booklets are collected, each participants response will be recorded. It will be noted if the participant has an unfinished survey or test booklet. It is expected that all participants finish the surveys and test booklets within the time limits. Self-esteem will be rated based off the survey questions. The test booklet grades will be compared to the survey scores to see if there is a correlation between school grades and self-esteem. The unfinished and skipped questions will be included as well to see if a certain subject had a lower grade compared to the others. It is expected that there will be a correlation between the participants self-esteem and their test grades.

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to determine if there was a correlation between self-esteem and academic performance. We expect that the hypothesis will be supported and that the participants with positive self-esteem will have higher grades than participants with low self-esteem. Finding a correlation would express that how a person is feeling about themselves could positively or negatively impact their academics. Successful grades with positive survey answers would imply that the hypothesis is accurate. Likewise, unsuccessful grades with negative survey answers would imply that the hypothesis is accurate. These results would give us a better understanding of how a person's self-esteem could affect their academic grades.

The results will form upon previous research examining self-esteem and academic performance in adolescent students. In Raskauskas et al.'s (2015) study, good academic

performance was associated with higher self-esteem. The present study will extend on this by using the surveys to see how high a participant's self-esteem is and compare it to the grades they get in the test booklet. Our results showed that majority of the students with higher self-esteem did significantly better than the students who were determined to have low self-esteem.

Discussed in research by Ross, C. E., & Broh, B. A. (2000), adolescents believe that if the achievement of goals are outside of their control, no matter if they are successes or failures, that their grades and test scores will suffer. The present study will extend on this by seeing how the participants critically think through the questions in the booklet without studying so it will show if they put in more effort or if they will skip over questions. Specifically, the math portion of the test booklet showed the strongest correlation out of the four subjects tested. It was noted that most of the questions skipped were in this portion.

Using adolescents in a study can have a couple concerns regarding the results. With the testing we advised the proctors to answer questions if the students had any. This could have had an effect on getting the right answer if the proctors did not carefully word their explanations. Also, this could have allowed some students to cheat while the proctor was busy. The way we could improve on this is by having the proctors well educated on how to handle answering questions and have more than one proctor per room to avoid cheating. Additional concerns involve the testing environment. The classrooms available at two of the schools were close to the lunch room. The noise whenever lunch was let out potentially disrupted the students. Also, the bells were ringing during the testing period which could have also disrupt the students. A way we can resolve these issues is choosing an outside testing area where the students will not be disrupted. Lastly in research from Luo et al. (2020), the results showed that the relationship

between academic performance and self-esteem may change in different developmental phases. Future studies are needed to better understand the developmental changes in the relationships.

If it is found that self-esteem and academic performance have a correlation, future studies could examine what causes them to have an effect on each other. Future studies could also figure out ways to improve self-esteem to help students better their academic standing. This research could be used to compare to similar studies to determine other variables that have a correlation or direct effect which will help improve our understanding of how self-esteem can impact academic achievement.

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Appendix
Self-Esteem Scale

1= strongly agree

2= agree

3=disagree

4=strongly disagree

1. On a whole, I am confident in myself. ____
2. I believe I am no good compared to others. ____
3. I wish I was more confident in myself. ____
4. I feel like I have good qualities. ____
5. I am beyond great. ____
6. I feel like I am looked down upon. ____
7. I can amount to something great. ____
8. I feel disconnected myself. ____

Total score: _____/32