THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

Introduction: self-esteem is the strongest psychological factor in predicting learning performance and the most important factor in academic achievement of university students. Given the importance of self-esteem and its impact on students’ motivation to continue their education, the present study was conducted to examine the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement motivation in students at Zahedan University of Medical Sciences.

Methodology: the present descriptive-analytical study was conducted on 200 students at Zahedan University of Medical Sciences in 2015. Data collection was performed using a three-part questionnaire (demographic characteristics, Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and Harter’s Academic Motivation Questionnaire). Then, using the SPSS-19 software, the collected data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, independent t-test, ANOVA, Pearson correlation and Chi-square tests.

Results: regarding self-esteem, the results showed that 107 students were significantly below average, 73 students were average and 20 students were significantly above average. Significant relationships were also observed between self-esteem and intrinsic motivation (p<0.001) and between self-esteem and extrinsic motivation (p<0.001).

Conclusion: the results of this study showed a significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement motivation in university students.

Keywords: self-esteem, academic achievement, university students.
Introduction

Self-esteem is people’s perceptions and feelings about themselves [1]. Self-esteem is a part of an individual’s self-concept including cognitive, behavioral and emotional aspects. In fact, self-esteem is how an individual appreciates and evaluates his/her abilities [2]. Self-esteem is originated from an individual’s social life and daily activities; thus, it is one of the most important aspects of people’s personality and behavioral traits [3 & 4]. The formation and promotion of self-esteem continue until death. People’s beliefs and attitudes towards themselves determine who actually they are, what they can do and who they will become. These thoughts are essentially strong internal pressures forcing people to grow and develop [5]. Researchers also believe that self-esteem is one of the determinants of human behaviors [6]. Healthcare professionals are constantly facing common ethical issues [7 & 8]; thus, they need to be able to respond properly to any situation they face. In other words, they need to have high levels of self-esteem.

Decision-making, innovation, creativity and mental health are directly related to levels of self-esteem and self-worth [9]. Self-esteem is the most powerful psychological factor in predicting learning performance [10] and the most important factor in academic achievement of university students [11 & 12].

In a study, Pix and colleagues found a weak relationship between global self-esteem and academic achievement [13]; however, it was concluded that self-esteem indirectly affects academic achievement through the mediating effects of academic self-concept [14]. Low self-esteem is also one of the factors contributing to the decline in students’ achievement motivation [15]. The identification of factors leading to the increase or decrease of achievement motivation helps scholars predict people’s behaviors [16]. Motivation is the most important factor in directing people’s behaviors towards achieving their goals; its presence facilitates learning and communication, decreases anxiety and increases creativity in learning. Motivation is an internal state forcing people to work harder in order to achieve their goals [18]. Studies have shown that most of the innovations, productions, discoveries and creations are resulted from high levels of motivation [19]. There is a relationship between learning and motivation, so that learners’ prior knowledge affects their motivation [20]. In a study, Rouhi showed that people with high levels of intrinsic motivation are internally regulated and do not let other people or external factors affect their performance; thus, a low level of intrinsic motivation can be considered as an important problem in the process of goal achievement [21]. Every year, many students hopelessly peruse their education or even stop continuing it due to their dissatisfaction with the courses [22]. Factors affecting learning and academic achievement
are varied and the identification of these factors is very important in solving existing problems and deficiencies in the educational systems. One of the factors contributing to people’s academic achievement is intrinsically motivating them to learn [16]. Accordingly, given the importance of self-esteem and its impact on students’ motivation to continue their education, the present study was conducted to examine the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement motivation in students at Zahedan University of Medical Sciences.

Methodology

The present descriptive-analytical study was conducted to examine the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement motivation in students studying at Zahedan University of Medical Sciences. Using simple random sampling method, 200 students were selected out of the whole population. Data collection was performed using a three-part questionnaire (demographic characteristics, Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and Harter’s Academic Motivation Questionnaire).

In Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, the minimum and maximum scores are 0 and 50 respectively (scores below 26: low self-esteem; scores between 27 and 43: average self-esteem; and scores over 44: high self-esteem). Validity and reliability of this inventory have been confirmed in Iran [23]. The Academic Motivation Questionnaire used in the present study was a revised version of the original Harter’s Academic Motivation Questionnaire (1981) translated into Persian by Mahmoud Borhani. Validity and reliability of the Persian version of this questionnaire have been confirmed. Accordingly, two subscales of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have been identified. Cronbach’s alphas of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have been reported 0.85 and 0.69 respectively. Test-retest reliability coefficients of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have also been reported 0.86 and 0.72 respectively. This 33-item questionnaire (17 items measure intrinsic motivation and 16 items measure extrinsic motivation) is scored on a 5-point Likert scale and higher scores indicate higher levels of motivation. Thus, the three-part questionnaire was distributed among the examined students after explanation of research objectives and obtaining their consent. Then, using the SPSS-19 software, the collected data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, independent t-test, ANOVA, Pearson correlation and Chi-square tests.

Results

Out of the whole 200 students who participated in the present study, 149 students were male and 51 were female; 48 students (%24) were studying at School of Nursing and Midwifery, 21 (%10.2) at School of Rehabilitation Sciences, 43
The relationships of age and gender with intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and self-esteem were not significant \((p>0.05)\). The relationship between field of study and extrinsic motivation was not significant \((p>0.05)\); however, the relationships between field of study and intrinsic motivation \((p=0.002)\) and between field of study and self-esteem were significant \((p<0.001)\).

Out of the whole participants, 107 people \((53.5\%)\) had low self-esteem, 73 people \((36.5\%)\) had average self-esteem and 20 people \((10\%)\) had high self-esteem. The results also showed significant relationships between self-esteem and intrinsic motivation \((p<0.001)\) and between self-esteem and extrinsic motivation \((p<0.001)\).

**Discussion**

The results of this study showed a statistically significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement motivation (including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation). Accordingly, students with higher levels of self-esteem are more motivated to achieve academic goals. This finding was in line with results of another study conducted by Korman. The results showed that self-esteem can affect academic achievement motivation [24].

Atkinson showed that high self-esteem stimulates academic motivation in learners while low self-esteem demotivates them [25]. People with high self-esteem can cope with everyday problems more efficiently and are more successful in pursuing and achieving their goals [26]. These people place higher expectations over their performance and try harder to perform better in learning situations.

Some researchers believe that the direct relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement is truer during the schooling period, because in this period merit is defined only by getting better scores. However, in university, in addition to educational issues, social issues such as dormitory life, disinterest in the field of study and concerns over future careers can decrease the impacts of academic achievement in the promotion of self-esteem [27].

Low levels of self-esteem may result in depression [28]. Since most of the students in the present study had low levels of self-esteem, it is recommended that professors let students contribute to the implementation of class regulation in order to create compatibility and enhance students’ self-esteem. This method increases students’ sense of responsibility. Universities can also familiarize students with various occupations through educational programs and leisure activities in
order to promote their self-esteem. In this study, the results also indicated a significant relationship between field of study and self-esteem which was not consistent with results of Alizade and colleagues’ study [29]. The findings of a study showed that learning styles of the students are different and it related to academic performance [30]. It has been proven that economic status can affect people’s academic success [31]. Therefore, not considering the examined students’ economic status can be reflected as one of the limitations of the present study.

Conclusion

The results of this study showed a significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement motivation in university students. High self-esteem is an essential factor in the improvement of academic achievement motivation and learning; therefore, effective measures should be taken by managers and authorities to improve students’ self-esteem.

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