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## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANC EAMONG STUDENTS

Azizollah Arbabisarjou<sup>1</sup>, Sadegh Zare<sup>2\*</sup>, Mahnaz Shahrakipour<sup>3</sup>, AhmadHawoshki<sup>2</sup>,  
Nabileh Arish<sup>2</sup>, Younes Jahadpanah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Children and Adolescents Health Research Center, Zahedan University of Medical Science, Zahedan, IRIran.

<sup>2</sup>Community Nursing Research Center, Student Scientific Research Center,

Zahedan University of Medical Sciences, Zahedan, Iran.

<sup>3</sup>Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, School of Health, Pregnancy Health Research Center, Zahedan  
University of Medical Sciences, Zahedan, Iran.

*Email: [zaresadegh93@yahoo.com](mailto:zaresadegh93@yahoo.com)*

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### Abstract:

**Introduction** Self-esteem is a degree of approval, acceptance and value that a person feels about themselves. It is one of the factors contributing to academic achievement. One important concern of teachers, educational authorities and the families of students involve academic achievement and how to prevent failure. That is because academic failure have a significant impact on the fate of the individuals imposing a heavy cost on the family and society. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement among students.

**Materials &Methods:** This was a cross-sectional analytical study conducted on 200 students randomly. These students were studying at Zahedan University of Medical Sciences. Data were collected through a two-part questionnaire: the first part related to demographic characteristics while the second part related to five-point Cooper Smith scale. Finally, the data were analyzed through SPSS software version 19.0, descriptive statistics, independent t-test, ANOVA, Pearson correlation and chi square.

**Findings:** This study involved subjects at mean age of  $22.74 \pm 2.22$ , and average grade of  $15.82 \pm 1.50$ . Moreover, 149 of subjects were male. Average scores on overall self-esteem was  $15.82 \pm 1.5$ , family self-esteem was  $11.96 \pm 2.22$ , social self-esteem was  $11.57 \pm 2.12$  and educational self-esteem was  $12.23 \pm 2.13$ . Overall, 107 subjects (53.5%) had low self-esteem, 73 had moderate self-esteem, and 20 had high self-esteem. The relationship between self-esteem and overall grade point

( $p=0.003$ ) and scope of general public esteem ( $P=0.03$ ) was significant, whereas it was insignificant with family self-esteem ( $P=0.187$ ), social self-esteem ( $P=0.634$ ) and educational self-esteem ( $P=0.138$ ).

**Conclusions:** The results of this study showed that students with high self-esteem had more academic success. The education status of students will be more likely to enhance through concentration on self-esteem of students and employment of methods that improve self-esteem, such as counseling or workshops that promote students' self-esteem.

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

## **Introduction**

Self-esteem is degree of approval, acceptance, and value that a person feels about themselves (1) reflected in all daily activities. It is regarded as the most important aspect of human personality and behavioral traits(2). Moreover, self-esteem is an important factor influencing the quality of life by increasing individual sense of empowerment and value. It can leave positive changes such as academic achievement, increased efforts to achieve success, high confident, ambitious ideas and tendency toward higher health(3).

Students with high self-esteem are able to communicate and express feelings and emotions in different situations, tolerate failure and disappointment, take responsibility, and a positive sense of self ad internal control. Conversely, students with low self-esteem are dependent, do not cope with frustration, and have difficulty making decisions(4). Coopersmith regarded self-esteem as a variable threshold, the low value of which leaves a deterrent effect on perseverance, confidence and academic achievement, disrupting the individual's performance in the psychological, physical, social and family terms(5). In this regard, self-esteem has been revealed to play a very important role in promoting mental health(6,7). The results of a study on students at the University of Leicester in 2004 showed 23% of students had anxiety disorders, 50% had depression or mood disorders and 49% had low self-esteem and problems associated with it(8).

Self-esteem is the strongest mental factor in predicting learning performance (9). Researchers believe that self-esteem is among the determinants of human behavior(10,11). Given that the healthcare professional career has always been faced with common ethical issues (12,13), requiring proper behavior in response to those ethical issues, there should be a high self-esteem.

Some studies have shown a significantly positive relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement(14–16). One important concern of teachers, educational authorities and the families of students involve academic achievement and

how to prevent failure. That is because academic failure have a significant impact on the fate of the individual imposing a heavy cost on the family and society(17). In Iran, tens of million Rials ( The unit for money) of national budget is squandered each year due to this very important problem within the education system(14). Therefore, experts in this field should focus on different aspects that somehow affect academic achievement.

Academic achievement of students is an important index in evaluating higher education, for realization of which all efforts have been directed. A closer look at the factors associated with academic achievement can point out that factors other than individual capabilities are associated with academic achievement(18).The investigation of factors contributing to academic achievement over the last three decades has been more than ever concerned by educations specialists. In this regard, researchers have been comprehensively dealing with academic achievement through interpersonal factors (psychological) and environmental factors that can predict academic achievement(19).

Therefore, it was decided to resolve the current ambiguities through a new study intending to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and academic performance among students.

## **Materials and Methods**

This was a cross-sectional analytical study examining the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement among university students of Medical Sciences. Random sampling was conducted on 200 students. Data were collected through a questionnaire composed of two parts. The first part dealt with demographic characteristics (age, sex, faculty and GPA), while the second part concerned Cooper Smith's five-point scale assessing four general areas of overall self-esteem, family self-esteem, social self-esteem and educational self-esteem. Minimum score was zero and maximum score was 50, where score less than 26 indicated poor self-esteem, scores 27-43 indicated moderate self-esteem, and scores more than 44 indicated high self-esteem. Reliability and validity of the questionnaire were confirmed in studies in Iran (23).

Moreover, this study used Cronbach's alpha to calculate reliability of the questionnaire at 0.8. To collect data, the researcher visited students during breaks between classes. Students were first briefed about the objectives. They then expressed their consent verbally, stressing within the questionnaire, "Your participation in this project shall be deemed upon your informed consent. The information in this questionnaire is confidential and shall not pose any danger to you". After explaining the purpose of the scheme, the questionnaire was handed to students willing to participate in the study.

Finally, the data were analyzed through SPSS 19, descriptive statistics, independent t-test, ANOVA, Pearson correlation and chi square.

### Findings:

This study involved subjects at mean age of  $22.74 \pm 2.22$ , and average grade of  $15.82 \pm 1.50$ . Moreover, 149 of subjects were male (74.5%). Average scores on overall self-esteem was  $15.82 \pm 1.5$ , family self-esteem was  $11.96 \pm 2.22$ , social self-esteem was  $11.57 \pm 2.12$  and educational self-esteem was  $12.23 \pm 2.13$ . Overall, 107 subjects (53.5%) had low self-esteem, 73 (36.5%) had moderate self-esteem, and 20 (10%) had high self-esteem.

The relationship between gender/age and overall self-esteem was not significant with each of the domains of self-esteem ( $P > 0.05$ ). Moreover, there was no significant relationship between faculty and each of the domains of self-esteem ( $P > 0.05$ ), while it was significant with overall self-esteem ( $P < 0.001$ ). The relationship between gender and academic achievement was significant ( $P = 0.004$ ).

The relationship between self-esteem and overall grade point ( $p = 0.003$ ) and scope of general public esteem ( $P = 0.03$ ) was significant, whereas it was insignificant with family self-esteem ( $P = 0.187$ ), social self-esteem ( $P = 0.634$ ) and educational self-esteem ( $P = 0.138$ ).

Table 1 displays the results of relationship between self-esteem and faculty.

Table 1: Relationship between self-esteem and faculty

			Self-esteem			Total
			Low	Average	High	
<b>Faculty</b>	Nursing	Count % within reshte	28 58.3%	10 20.8%	10 20.8%	48 100.0%
	Rehabilitation	Count % within reshte	9 42.9%	11% 52.4%	1 4.8%	21 100.0%
	Medical sciences	Count % within reshte	24 55.8%	13 30.2%	6 14.0%	43 100.0%
	Dentistry	Count % within reshte	2 9.5%	19 90.5%	0 0.0%	21 100.0%
	Paramedics	Count % within reshte	24 63.2%	12 31.6%	2 5.3%	38 100.0%
	Hygiene	Count	20	8	1	29

	% within reshte	69.0%	27.6%	3.4%	100.0%
Total	Count	107	73	20	200
	% within reshte	53.5%	36.5%	10.0%	100.0%

**Discussion:**

The factors contributing to students' academic progress have always of great concern to education experts and psychologists. Certainly, there is a set of individual and environmental, cognitive and non-cognitive factors affecting students' academic achievement. Academic achievement is multi-dimensional variable affected by multiple factors.

The results showed that there is a significant relationship between overall self-esteem and academic achievement of students, which is consistent with other studies(5,6,7). In a study by Henman on seventh graders, the results showed that there is a strong correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement(21). However, Zare et al. found that there is no significant correlation between GPA and self-esteem of students(22). Perhaps one of the reasons of such difference is that comparison should focus on the relationship between academic achievement and self-esteem in different societies, ethnicities, cultures and educational levels (23) to which little attention was paid in that study.

Many of the participants in this study had low self-esteem. Low self-esteem in childhood, adolescence and youth is the most important risk factors for depression in adults. Positive self-esteem even without social support can play a protective role against the risk of depression. On the other hand, some studies have shown that failure (in academic terms and social relationships) can have a devastating effect on self-esteem, while positive thinking training can enhance self-esteem and depression(24). Some students in college years are faced with more or less big problems, such as lack of interest in discipline, sense of learning disability, incorrect selection of courses, feeling compelled to accept educational regulations, problems in dormitories, financial requirements, poverty, and concerns about future job. Nevertheless, not all the psychological issues arise from students' socio-educational or social academic conditions but there are personal characteristics and the family involved. University plays several roles and its learning and social environment entails specific risks(25). Therefore, it is recommended that authorities create greater consistency and increase students' self-esteem, making professors and university students in the class share their situation and implementing regulations. This method increases the sense of responsibility in everyone. Also the university can familiarize students with various professions through class schedules and non-curriculum program, so as to enhance their self-esteem.

While overall academic achievement and self-esteem had a significant relationship there was no such significant relationship with family self-esteem. However, most theorists agree that self-esteem is underpinned by the family at the earliest years of life and self-esteem is nurtured by the attitudes of parents(26).A study found that parents have the greatest impact on students' attitudes toward learning(21).

The results of this study were consistent with those obtained by Salmalian et al. who found no significant difference between male and female students' self-esteem(24). It should be noted that since the data for this study were obtained through student self-report, they may not be so authentic. (27) However, this study made an effort to give a description to the students so as to solicit their utmost cooperation. Self-care education is emphasized because it leads in active role in treatment process and accepting responsibility for individual health (28). Social networks are used for behavior improvement, educational performance and other self-care education (29).It is suggested that similar studies be carried at larger scale with regard to religion, ethnicity, education level and economic status of families. The finding of a study showed that students' learning styles may have an impact on the academic performance (30). The limitations of this study could be psychological issues of students which were beyond the scope of researcher's control.

### **Conclusions:**

The results of this study showed that students with high self-esteem had more academic success. The education status of students will be more likely to enhance through concentration on self-esteem of students and employment of methods that improve self-esteem, such as counseling or workshops that promote students' self-esteem. Nonetheless, it seems that other factors associated with emotional and cultural conditions of Iranian society can be in direct correlation with academic success, in which regard it is suggested that more comprehensive study be conducted.

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**Corresponding Author:**

**Sadegh Zare\***,

**Email:** [zaresadegh93@yahoo.com](mailto:zaresadegh93@yahoo.com)