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THE IMPACT OF SELF-ESTEEM ON THE DEGREE OF GENERAL AND EXAMINATION ANXIETY

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The purpose of this research was to clarify the relationship to the level of self esteem and general and examination anxiety, as well as to determine the difference between general and examination anxiety among the students. Measuring instruments that were used in this research are Rosenberg self-esteem Scale, anxiety scale constructed by Hamilton and Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI).

In the survey attended 70 participants, students from the Institute of Social Work and Social Policy in Skopje. Revealed was a lower level of anxiety among the students with higher (normal) self-esteem, and vice versa, among those with low self-esteem has a significantly higher proportion of anxiety.

Also, it was proved that what the students that have a greater general anxiety, have significantly higher level of examination anxiety.

Keywords: self-esteem, general anxiety, test anxiety.

Introduction

Researches have shown that each of the stages of nowadays formal education is characterized by a significant increase in students' tasks and responsibilities and consequently in stressors and level of stress (Hampel et al., 2008). One of the most important stressors in students' life was mentioned the assessment or the tests (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008),

researchers noticing that test anxiety has increased over time, possibly due to an increase in testing and testing requirements (Whitaker et al., 2007).

Conceptual framework -students' self-esteem and exam's anxiety

The examinations in peoples' life are the contexts in which both the positive and negative psychological components are activated: the motivation to achieve is mixed with the fear of failure (Putwain, 2009), and self-esteem with doubts regarding their own worth.

It is agreed that "the experience of being evaluated, critiqued, or judged commonly results in an emotional reaction of uneasiness, uncertainty, or apprehension" (Donaldson et al., 2002, p.261). In general, evaluation anxiety refers to "the set of (primarily) affective, and also cognitive and behavioral responses that accompany concern over possible negative consequences contingent upon performance in an evaluative situation" (Donaldson et al., 2002, p.262). According to the literature, test anxiety is defined as an individual's physiological, cognitive, and behavioral responses that stimulate negative feelings about an evaluation (Nicaise, 1975), or as "an inability to think or remember, a feeling of tension, and difficulty in reading and comprehending simple sentences or directions on an examination" (Suinn, 1968, quoted in Ringeisen and Buchwald, 2010, p. 432). Researchers have stated that the test anxiety include emotionality, worry, cognitive interference, and a lack of self-confidence (Zeidner, 1998; Whitaker et al., 2007).

In the present study, the translation of the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) was used and Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale.

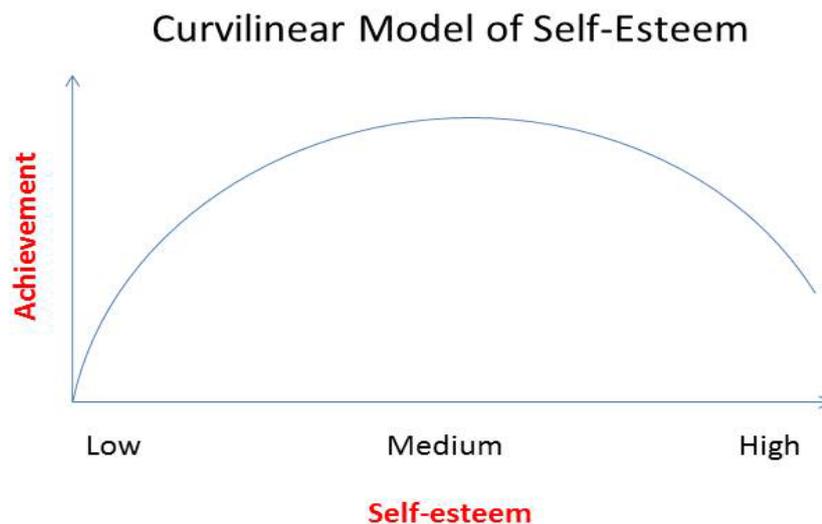
Test Anxiety Inventory was developed by Spielberger (1980). The Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI), is a self-report psychometric scale, developed to measure individual differences in test anxiety as a situation-specific trait. Based on a Likert Scale, the respondents are asked to report how frequently they experience specific symptoms of anxiety before, during and after examinations. In addition to measuring individual differences in anxiety proneness in test situations, the TAI subscales assess worry and emotionality as major components of test anxiety.

It consists of 20 items. According to Chapell, Blanding, Silverstein, Takahashi, Newman, Gubi, and McCann (2005), the Test Anxiety Inventory is the most important and widely used instrument for the measurement of high school and college students.

The Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A) is a psychological questionnaire used by clinicians to rate the severity of a patient's anxiety. Though it was one of the first anxiety rating scales to be published, the HAM-A remains widely used by clinicians. It was originally published by Max Hamilton in 1959. The scale consists of 14 items designed to assess the severity of a patient's anxiety. Each of the 14 items contains a number of symptoms, and each group of symptoms is rated on a scale of zero to four, with four being the most severe. All of these scores are used to compute an overarching score that indicates a person's anxiety severity. The Hamilton Anxiety Rating scale has been considered a valuable scale for many years, but the ever-changing definition of anxiety, new technology, and new research has had an effect on the scale's perceived usefulness. As a result, there have been changes, and challenges, to the original version of the scale over time.

In their literature review regarding self-esteem, Blascovich and Tomaka (1991) affirmed that "in common parlance self-esteem is the extent to which one prizes, values, approves or likes oneself" (p115). Generally, self-esteem was approached as a unidimensional construct (Rosenberg, 1965, 1989) and as a personality trait stable across time within individuals, but influenced between certain limits by many factors (Englert, Weed, & Watson 2000). Researchers identified numerous relationships of self-esteem, some of them conditional and some determinant. Therefore, self-esteem was related to academic achievement and academic success (Purky, 1970), depression and social anxiety (Moeller, 1994), self-efficacy, ego strength, hardiness, optimism and adjustment (Bernard et al., 1996). The relationship between self esteem and test anxiety, among high school students was less studied, although the emotional and behavioral consequences of variation in their self-esteem levels are well known.

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSES), developed by sociologist Dr. Morris Rosenberg, is a self-esteem measure widely used in social-science research. The RSES is designed similar to social-survey questionnaires. It is a ten-item Likert-type scale with items answered on a four-point scale — from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Five of the items have positively worded statements and five have negatively worded ones. The scale measures state self-esteem by asking the respondents to reflect on their current feelings. The original sample for which the scale was developed consisted of 5,024 high-school juniors and seniors from 10 randomly selected schools in New York State. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale is considered a reliable and valid quantitative tool for self-esteem assessment.



Roy F. Baumeister, professor of psychology at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, OH, has been studying self-esteem for decades, and has published more research on the topic than any other specialist in the U.S. According to him, self-esteem is, literally, how favorably a person regards him or herself. Baumeister writes: “High self-esteem can mean confident and secure—but it can also mean conceited, arrogant, narcissistic, and egotistical.” What’s more, there’s little to no correlation between self-esteem and academic performance, and Baumeister’s not the first to discover this.

Kansas State University professor Candice Shoemaker looks at the psychological constructs of “confidence” and “self-efficacy” (a fancy term for academic confidence, in this case) to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted learning objectives on student achievement.

“Confidence is a measure of one’s belief in one’s own abilities and is considered a psychological trait that is related to, but distinct from, both personality and ability traits,” she says. “An interrelated construct is ‘self-efficacy,’ which refers to a person’s belief in one’s capabilities to learn or perform behaviors. Research shows that self-efficacy influences academic motivation, learning, and achievement. “

Although confidence and self-efficacy are interrelated, she says, a defining aspect of self-efficacy, which distinguishes it from the more general construct of confidence, is its domain-specific nature.

Research Methodology

Participants in this study were 70 students from Institute of social work and social policy in Skopje.

Data were collected with self-rating questionnaires assessing self-esteem and anxiety. Self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965, 1989, Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991) is a 10 items scale to be answered on five Likert-type scales from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Example of items: “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself”). The scores range from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem.

The Test Anxiety Scale (TAS) is a self-report scale, developed based on Spielberger’s (1979, 1980) Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) to measure students’ anxiety related to their upcoming exams. It is a 10 items scale, with answers in a 5-point scale, from 1= “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”. The respondents are asked to report their agreement/disagreement with the statements that are referring to worry and emotionality when they are thinking to the tests they will take (regular or graduation test) (e.g., “I ask myself whether my performance will be good enough; “I have not enough faith in my own performance”). The

scores range from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating higher levels of exams' anxiety. The psychometrics was very good (table 1)

Participation was voluntarily and anonymity was guaranteed. The questionnaires have been completed individually by the subjects, the operators providing supplementary explanations where the case. Active consents of the students and their parents were collected. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data.

Results

As shown in Table 1, the mean score for the students' self-esteem is below 4 (3.99), showing a high level, but not the highest; while exams' anxiety, are 2.65 (between low and moderate level).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the measured variables

Variable	Mean	SD
Self-esteem	3.99	0.58
Exams' anxiety	2.65	0.75

Correlational analysis identified significant negative relationships of self-esteem with exams' anxiety (table 2).

Table 2. Correlations between students' self-esteem and exams' anxiety

Scale	Self-esteem	Exams' anxiety
Self-esteem	1	-.36
Exams' anxiety	-.36	1

The aims of this study were to gain a more highly defined understanding of relationship between students' self-esteem and exams' anxiety. We appreciate that the objectives of this study have been successfully met as the above presented results answered the research questions.

The results support the idea that students' perceptions of their educational environment and their personality characteristics are linked with test anxiety.

Considering the results of the present study, certain limitations should be kept in mind. The study sample did not represent all Macedonian students. Depending on this limitation, the findings of the study need to be replicated on more representative and wide samples of students. Future studies could benefit from a larger sample size, selecting participants from other parts of the country. Another limitation of the study comes from the fact that the research data were gathered with the help of self-report scales based on their own perceptions. Therefore, the findings are limited by their assessments, and further efforts with the use of different scales and methods may expand these findings. On the other hand, future studies could include more variables (e.g. adolescents' social and academic background).

RECOMMENDATION

In view of the findings of this study, it could be recommended that faculty authorities should work out guidelines as well as develop a program that help students to cope with test anxiety. Students should be given adequate time to rest and plan for their examinations rather than last minute rush revision that may not allow them to satisfactorily prepare for their examinations. Also, school authorities and all stakeholders in education must help students to appreciate the connection between self-esteem and academic performance by initiating programs that help to grasp and subdue challenges. When students understand that one's own competence and self-efficacy moderate performance, they are likely to be more diligent and persistent rather than being weak and helpless.

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