

## PSYRGGU 2020

### Psychology of Personality: Real and Virtual Context

# THE ROLE OF SELF-ESTEEM IN THE REGULATION OF STUDENTS' MENTAL STATES

A. O. Prokhorov (a)\*, A. V. Chernov (b), M. G. Yusupov (c)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, Kremlyovskaya, 18, 420008, Kazan, Russia,  
alprokhor1011@gmail.com,

(b) Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, Kazan, Russia,

(c) Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, Kazan, Russia,

### *Abstract*

The article presents the results of a study of the influence of self-esteem on the mental states of students during educational activities. It is shown some foreign and Russian theoretical approaches concerning self-system. The study involved 69 students of the Institute of psychology and education aged 18-20 years. It is shown that there is a specificity of the self-esteem influence on psychological states depending on the forms of educational activity: at lectures, seminars and exams. It was established the mediating role of self-esteem in the self-regulation of students' mental states. Students with low level of self-esteem at lectures and seminars are dominated by mental states of low intensity of manifestation. Students with an average level of self-esteem are characterized by positive states: from vigor and expectation to interest and gaiety. In the case of high self-esteem, mental states vary in modality and intensity. While the level of self-esteem increases, the intensity of manifestation of psychological states' substructures (mental processes, experiences and behavior) also increases, and vice versa. The average self-esteem is most optimal in the regulation of mental states. In the case of high self-esteem, the most optimal psychological states are experienced by students with high independence. Students with low self-esteem experience the least intense states.

2357-1330 © 2020 Published by European Publisher.

**Keywords:** Self-system, mental state, self-esteem, self-regulation, educational activity.



## 1. Introduction

In modern psychology, the mental mechanisms of regulation of human mental states are not properly investigated. This is especially true towards the "system of Self" and its role in the regulation of mental states. This situation is due to, on the one hand, the lack of a developed conceptual framework that explains and describes the regulatory function of the "Self-system", and, on the other hand, the unsettled categorical structure of the "system of Self", which leads to vagueness in understanding the "Self" of a person.

The content and scope of this construct still remain controversial. In particular, when describing the "Self" of a person, his self-consciousness, different categories are used, as a rule, referring to a certain author's theory: "identity", "Self-concept", "Self-image", "Ego", "empirical personality", "Picture of Me" and others. In recent years, a significant number of studies of the "system of the Self" and related phenomena have been performed. Dozens of forms of "Self" were discovered: self-esteem, self-affirmation, self-control, verification of "Self", "Self-discrepancies", identity, etc. This is a very short and incomplete list of the huge variety of forms of "Self" discovered by psychologists (Leary & Tangney, 2003). However, a single area of research "Self" did not arise; rather, on the contrary, aggregation of a multitude of distinct regions arbitrarily assigned to the "Self" occurred (Baumeister & Bushman, 1998).

## 2. Problem Statement

At the same time, most researchers recognize the multidimensionality, hierarchy of the "system of Self" and include a wide range of forms of representations in it: self-image, emotional-value relationship, self-esteem, etc. The necessity of an integrative approach to the phenomenon of "Self" in order to disclose it as a coherent organized system is emphasized. In most studies, the "Self" is considered as the existential core of the personality, ensuring its internal self-organization and self-regulation.

The "Image of Self" is studied as an integrative institution, which includes a cognitive component: the image of one's qualities, abilities, capabilities, social significance, appearance, etc.; affective - attitude to oneself (self-esteem, self-respect, self-humiliation, etc.), behavioral - the practical implementation of motives, goals in relevant behavioral acts (Dorfman, 2019).

In studying the influence of the "Self-system" on various manifestations of life and human behavior, a number of patterns were revealed. Therefore, Bandura (1978) showed that the "Self-system" includes cognitive structures and subfunctions for the perception, assessment and regulation of behavior. Another study identified differences in current and future perceptions of oneself (Lieberman et al., 2007). Relationships of the "Self of the image" with the structure of self-esteem and self-acceptance (Kruczek, 2017), as well as the "Self of the image" with positive behavior (Venhoeven et al., 2013) were discovered. The role of self-esteem "Self" in perfectionism is shown (Nepon et al., 2011). Connections have been found between the aggression of "difficult" adolescents and the rigidity of their self-awareness system (Edens, 1999).

## 3. Research Questions

To a lesser extent, the relationship between the "system of self" and mental states is investigated. They are mainly concentrated in the field of medicine: the role of the "Self-system" in integrated counseling

(Cook-Greuter & Soulen, 2007), in the treatment of depression (Strauman & Eddington, 2017), in self-organization strategies for psychotherapy (Rosa-Gonçalves et al., 2018).

Overall, the role of the "system of Self" in the mental regulation of states has been little studied. This situation is due to the lack of a developed conceptual framework explaining and describing the mental mechanisms of self-regulation of states, as well as the lack of empirical data.

#### 4. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to diagnose the effects of self-esteem level on the regulation of students' mental states.

#### 5. Research Methods

The study of self-esteem role in the regulation of mental states was attended by 69 first and second year students of the full-time department of the Institute of Psychology and Education, Kazan Federal University. The study of mental states was carried out in various situations of educational activity: at lectures, seminars and exams. During the study, the following methods were used:

1. Questionnaire "Relief of mental states of personality" (A.O. Prokhorov).
2. The method for the self-esteem study (M. Budassi).
3. The method "The style of behavior self-regulation" (V.I. Morosanova, E.M. Konož).

It was used standard Mathematical Analysis Package SPSS 18.0. For the analysis of the research results used Spearman's correlation coefficient, short statistics and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

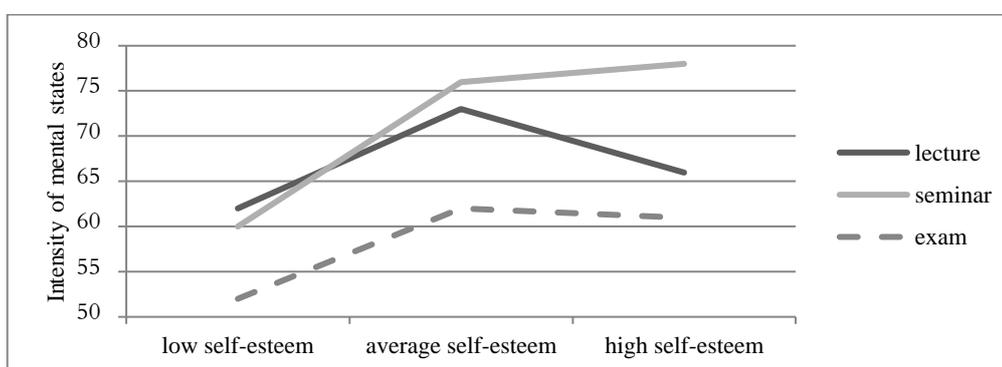
#### 6. Findings

As a result of the studies, it was found that during various forms of educational activity, students with different levels of self-esteem are dominated by mental states of different intensity and modality. As shown in Table 1, students with a low level of self-esteem at a lecture and a seminar are dominated by mental states with a low intensity of manifestation, such as drowsiness, apathy. The state of interest is less common.

**Table 01.** Typical mental states of students with different levels of self-esteem in various situations of educational activity (mental states are presented in order of occurrence frequency)

Level of self-esteem / form of educational activity	Lecture	Seminar	Exam
Low self-esteem	Drowsiness, apathy, interest	Drowsiness, apathy, interest	Excitement
Average self-esteem	Cheerfulness, expectation	Interest, cheerfulness	Excitement, concentration
High self-esteem	Fatigue, cheerfulness	Drowsiness, cheerfulness, cheerfulness	Excitement, concentration, cheerfulness

Students with an average level of self-esteem are characterized by positive states of a high level of intensity: from cheerfulness and expectation to interest and gaiety. Mental states of students with high self-esteem vary in modality and intensity, with some prevalence of low-intensity states, such as drowsiness and fatigue. In a tense situation of exam, excitement is the dominant state for all levels of self-esteem. Students with an average level of self-esteem also have a state of concentration, while students with high self-esteem also experience fun state. Thus, it can be summarized that the average level of self-esteem is the most optimal for effective educational activities of students, since it is accompanied by an experience of positive mental states, including cognitive ones. Figure 1 shows a summary graph that reflects the intensity of students' mental states with different levels of self-esteem in various forms of educational activity.



**Figure 01.** The intensity of students' mental states with different levels of self-esteem in various forms of educational activity

As shown in picture 1, the least intense mental states are presented in the exam, regardless of the student's self-esteem. Significantly more intense states are presented at lectures and seminars. Moreover, at seminars, the intensity of mental states reaches maximum values, especially of students with a high and medium self-esteem. In all forms of educational activity, the least intense mental states are observed in students with low self-esteem, however, as self-esteem increases from low to medium level, the intensity of students' experiences increases. The most interesting patterns were found in students with high self-esteem: at the exam and seminar, the intensity of states corresponds to the states of people with average self-esteem, while at the lecture it decreases significantly.

Most likely, people with low self-esteem are the least effective in all forms of educational activity, because they experience mental states of low energy activity. This is especially true of the exam situation, where the mental states of students with average and high self-esteem are more balanced. In the seminar form of educational activity, positive states of high and medium intensity were found in individuals with medium and high self-esteem. Note that, for students with an average self-esteem the most optimal is the lecture form of education.

Consider the relationship of self-esteem with various substructures of mental states. As shown in table 2, there is a significant direct relationship between state substructures (mental processes, experiences, behavior) and students' self-esteem. That is, with an increase in the level of self-esteem, the intensity of state substructures also increases, and vice versa. Similar relationships with the physiological reactions scale have not been established.

**Table 02.** The relationship of self-esteem with various substructures of mental states

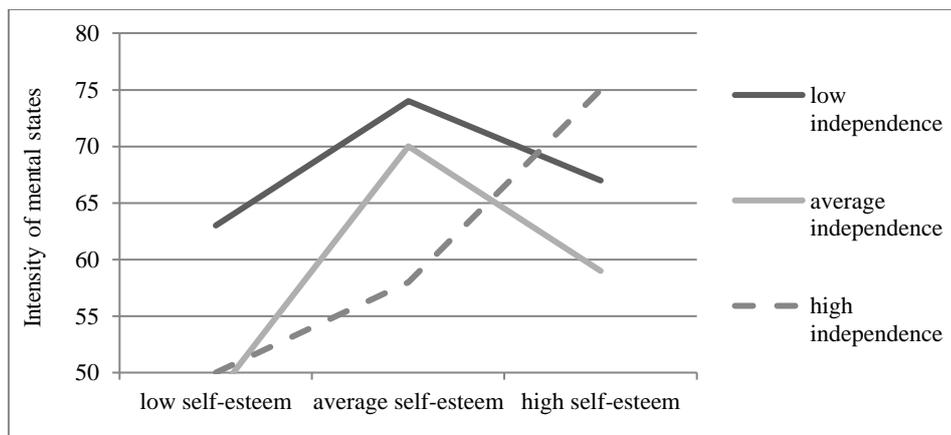
	Scale of mental processes	Scale of physiological reactions	Scale of experience	Scale of behavior	Scale of average values
Spearman's correlation coefficient	0,2433	0,0577	0,3015	0,2783	0,2644
Significance Level (sig)	<b>0,003</b>	0,497	<b>0,000</b>	<b>0,000</b>	<b>0,001</b>

Next, we consider the mediating role of self-esteem in the regulation of students' mental states during educational activities. As a result of ANOVA, it was found that the greatest influence on the interaction of mental states and self-esteem have the regulatory properties of "independence" ( $p < 0,033$ ) (Fig. 2, Table 3) and "ability to program actions" ( $p < 0.002$ ) As an example, consider the influence of self-esteem on the mental states of students with different levels of independence.

**Table 03.** The influence of self-esteem on the mental states of students with different levels of independence

Source of variability	Dependent variable (mental state)	Sum of squares	df	Average square (MS)	P-value
Average structure	9024,269	8	1128,034	4,087	,000
self-esteem	3775,439	2	1887,720	6,839	,002
independence	1925,351	2	962,675	3,488	,033
The interaction of self-esteem and independence	2712,669	4	678,167	2,457	,049

As shown in Table 3, a significant influence of self-esteem ( $p < 0.002$ ) and independence ( $p < 0.033$ ) on the intensity of students' states during the course of educational activity was revealed both separately and in the interaction of indicators ( $p < 0.049$ ). Similar results were obtained for the scale of "actions programming".



**Figure 02.** The influence of self-esteem on the mental states of students with different levels of independence

As shown in figure 2, the most intense states are characteristic of students with high self-esteem and independence, as well as with an average self-esteem and medium or low indicators of independence. If

independence is high, while the level of self-esteem increases, the intensity of the experienced mental states also increases. In turn, at low or medium indices of independence, the most intense states are experienced by individuals with average self-esteem. In general, the average self-esteem is optimal for the regulation of mental states. High self-esteem is favorable with high independence of the subject. Students with low self-esteem experience the least intense states, including drowsiness, apathy, fatigue, etc.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, as a result of the study, the following patterns were established:

1. Students with low level of self-esteem at lectures and seminars are dominated by mental states of low intensity of manifestation. Students with an average level of self-esteem are characterized by positive states: from vigour and expectation to interest and gaiety. In the case of high self-esteem, mental states vary in modality and intensity.

2. While the level of self-esteem increases, the intensity of manifestation of psychological states' substructures (mental processes, experiences and behaviour) also increases, and vice versa.

3. The average self-esteem is most optimal in the regulation of mental states. In the case of high self-esteem, the most optimal psychological states are experienced by students with high independence. Students with low self-esteem experience the least intense states.

In applied terms, the obtained results are significant for practical purposes as the basis for the development of technologies, techniques, trainings in psychological counseling related to human life: social and psychological well-being, for the prevention and improvement of mental health, quality of life, the effectiveness of human activities.

## Acknowledgments

The research was carried out with the financial support of the RFBR; project No. 20-013-00076.

## References

- Bandura, A. (1978). The self-system in reciprocal determinism. *American Psychologist*, 33, 344-358.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Bushman, B.J. (1998). Threatened egotism, narcissism, self-esteem, and direct and displaced aggression: Does self-love or self-hate lead to violence? *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 75(1), 219-229.
- Cook-Greuter, S., & Soulen, J. (2007). The developmental perspective in integral counseling. *Counseling and values*, 51(3), 180-192.
- Dorfman, L. (2019). *Metodologicheskiye osnovy empiricheskoy psikhologii*. [Methodological foundations of empirical psychology]. Yurait Publishing House.
- Edens, J. F. (1999). Aggressive children's self-systems and the quality of their relationships with significant others. *Aggression and violent behavior*, 4, 151-177.
- Leary, M. R., & Tangney, J. P. (Eds.). (2003). *Handbook of self and identity*. Guilford Press.
- Kruczek, A. (2017). Relationship of self-image and self-acceptance with the expression of anger in girls diagnosed with conduct disorder. *Psychiatria i Psychologia Kliniczna*, 17(4), 314-324.
- Lieberman, N., Trope, Y., & Wakslak, C. (2007). Construal Level Theory and Consumer Behavior. *Journal of consumer psychology*, 17(2), 113-117.

- Nepon, T., Flett, G. L., Hewitt, P. L., & Molnar, D. S. (2011). Perfectionism, negative social feedback, and interpersonal rumination in depression and social anxiety. *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science*, 43(4), 297-308.
- Rosa-Gonçalves, D., Bernardes, M., & Costa, L. (2018). Quality of life and functional capacity in patients with rheumatoid arthritis—Cross-sectional study. *Reumatología Clínica*, 14(6), 360-366.
- Strauman, T. J., & Eddington, K. M. (2017). Treatment of Depression from a Self-Regulation Perspective: Basic Concepts and Applied Strategies in Self-System Therapy. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 41, 1-15.
- Venhoeven, L. A., Bolderdijk, J. W., & Steg, L. (2013). Explaining the paradox: how pro-environmental behavior can both thwart and foster well-being. *Sustainability*, 5, 1372-1386.