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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND  
ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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*Abstract*

The paper "The relationship between self-esteem and academic success" focuses on the applicative dimension, on the way to capitalize the relation between self-esteem and academic achievement at the level of educational activities, but also to highlight the implication of the factors (social-economical - family, school, gender, group of friends, etc.) that influence the self-esteem of the educated, and the educational reality has demonstrated us how the subject adopts the coordinates of stability or instability, overestimates or underestimates. This study aims to provide information and methods for teachers to leverage their self-esteem and academic success, as well as methods used to improve self-esteem, as identifying the causes that led to a low self-esteem at learner and implicitly when school failure occurs. Thus, self-esteem contributes to the mobilization of subjects' mechanisms and to the drawing of realistic objectives that ensure its academic success, but also to a quality of individual and socio-professional life. In order to succeed in situations, in challenging new tasks, to function more efficiently in the social and professional environment, the individual develops his features as self-sufficiency, optimism for present and future success, and confidence in his own features that support him in reaching of the goals set, and in the limit situations to redirect its own strengths to achieve the desired success.

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## 1. Introduction

Over time, through the development of various theories, the concept of self-esteem has developed its dimension, becoming more comprehensive through the approaches at the level of encompassing: the self-image and its components: the present ego, the ideal ego, the future ego; the individual's lifestyle that targets the amount of behaviors and decisions that enhance the quality of individual, social and professional life, but also at the level of the content class: cognitive structures, affective system, emotions and mechanisms of defense and adaptation of the individual, the motivational system or perceived self-efficacy (Lemeni & Miclea; 2010; Băban, 2011; Lupu, 2013; Dafinoiu & Boncu, 2014) becoming over time a multidimensional concept that "explains how a person appreciates his abilities, competencies, physical appearance and social presence" (Byrne, 1996 as cited in Boncu & Ceobanu, 2013, p.40). From this point of view, the Great Dictionary of LaRousse psychology defines the concept of self-esteem as "the personal value, competence, associated by the individual with the image he has about himself" (Bloch, Chemama, Gallo, Leconte, Leny, Postel, & Reuchlin, 2006, p.1178). In order to analyze the multidimensional concept of self-esteem it is necessary to consider the theory of William James (1890, 1893), which emphasized that self-esteem is a concept developed along the evolution of the individual, linked to the individual's claims, his success. Thus, the self-esteem of the individual grows in the context in which his requirements are realistic, which calls forth his social and professional success (Mruk, 2006, 2013; Lupu, 2013).

Over time, have been published articles, chapters, books or meta-analyzes that have treated the link between the concept and the evolution of human behavior (Mruk, 2006, p. 1), but also its correlation with the success and failure of the individual which influence the lifestyle.

## 2. Problem Statement

In a dynamic society, under the influence of new global policies and the rethinking of the global capital market, goods, services or ideas, but also the development of the influence of information and communication technologies in the capital, service or professional sphere, the individual has to integrate as effectively as possible in this dynamics, where competitiveness leaves its mark. The upward dynamics of competitiveness attracts another pillar that contemporary society is grounding, the quality. At society level, it's aimed an improve of products, services through the elaboration of standards and indicators to guide the increase of their quality through the promoted educational policies (Cuc, 2012a, 2012b, 2014, 2015). In this structure of social and professional dynamics, the individual defines the "nucleus of hispersonality" (Zlate, 2004, p.84), develops the competences valorized at the cultural level, acquires personal autonomy, independence, assumes responsibilities and is responsible in charge; structures perceived self-efficacy of competencies required for performance and guidance to achieve academic goals, personal goals and why not success and well-being. In a society where we discuss about the social or professional success patterns, the motivation to change or the metamorphosis of the individual leadership, the educated is often "abducted by this beautiful dream "of the success promoted at the societal level and along its evolution struggles to achieve it, regardless of the consequences that leave its mark on the level of its cognitions, emotions or behaviors. In this social context, depending on the tasks the individual has to manage, his expectations and the way he considers himself in relation to his / her

own expectations and the others (Lemeni & Miclea, 2010, p.34), of the competences of the teachers promoted in class (Chiş 2002, 2005; Bocoş & Chiş, 2013), we face a variety of situations where individuals would take any action to avoid situations that would diminish the value of the self or shadow it by adopting an underestimation or overestimation, crossing situations in personal life from stability to instability, all these dimensions are under the influence of the stability of personal valorization and the intensity of personal valorisation (Cosmovici & Iacob, 1999; Neculau, 2004; Băban, 2011; Dafinoiu & Boncu, 2014; Creţu, 2016). Society with all its peculiarities develops the individual who cannot live without the emotions of his success or failure, which in any case generates for him a pressure, builds a lifestyle in time. The successful model promoted in society obliges the educated to mobilize all his / her internal resources to influence his / her academic achievement (Dulamă & Ilovan, 2016; Ilovan et al., 2018). However, it is necessary to consider that learners who have a low self-esteem, are generally dissatisfied with their person, exhibit a low level of tolerance to frustration and therefore refuse to assume the responsibility of some tasks, managing some new situations, the consequences due to the frustrations deriving from the failure and the low resistance to the pressure manifested by the evaluation of the effects or the group, which make these learners by the pressure factors to have a behavior in accordance with the success / failure.

### **3. Research Questions**

By looking at the research directions in psychology, pedagogy, sociology in close connection with the issues of our own self, we propose that the research be directed by the question:

To what extent do educational demarches on the students' global self-esteem influence their reduced self-esteem and produce improvements on their academic achievement?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The motivation of the theme focuses on the applicative dimension, the identification of the factors influencing the academic success or the failures of learners, but also on the relationship between success and self-esteem, failure and self-esteem. Success and failure are attributes of individual development encountered in the areas of social and professional activity that are in full correspondence with level of expectations, individual and / or collective aspirations, and confirmed results influenced by the objective or subjective assessment of partial and final effects, through a comparison of them with the expected results. From this point of view the learner through his / her active or passive participation along the educational path influences his academic success / failure. Of course, it is considered the whole complex dimension of the concept of academic success, which is under the influence of the learner`s personality factors, of the social, with all the subsystems, of the psychopedagogical and methodological nature, the beliefs, the system of values, expectations, extraversion of learner, beliefs about their own characteristics, capacities, level of self-confidence and in others, etc. Thus, A. Adler states that "success / failure depends on the way of life, on the opinion that man does about his life, an opinion most often unconscious (Adler, 1933/1995, p. 39, cited in Lupu, 2013, p.45)" and the success of learning depends on the feeling of social communion of the child" (Lupu, 2013, p.45). In a competitive educational system based on a semestrial and annual report of hierarchy of learners, on the valorisation of academic achievements, where

educational instructive activities at both integrated and monodisciplinary level allow each learner to highlight the competences and school successes, contribute to the development and improvement of high self-esteem, but perpetuates and even accentuates the characteristics of people with low self-esteem.

## **5. Research Methods**

In a social economy based on competitiveness where a result can represent for the individual his success or his social and / or professional failure, it is increasingly necessary to study the effects resulting from the attribution to the educated of the success / failure and the correlation ratio with the level of development of self-esteem.

The purpose of the research was to identify some ways to improve the academic self-concept that would improve academic success.

### **5.1. Research objectives**

Identifying at learners of how an academic success / failure produces effects on the level of global self-esteem;

Identifying the relationship between physical self -emotional self in learners and self-valorisation;

Highlighting possible solutions by interviewees to ameliorate school failure as an attribute of improving self-esteem.

The pursuit of the afore mentioned objectives is supported by the formulation of the working hypothesis.

### **5.2. Research hypothesis**

High self-esteem in learners determines the favorable influenzation of the academic success.

In order to achieve an efficient investigative approach, a rigor was imposed on the sampling of the target population, which was targeted in the research. In accordance with the objectives set, methods and research tools have been established that have ensured the sustainability of the investigative approach.

There have been considered a number of 213 subjects aged 18 and 25 years, being predominant 19-years-old (27.8%) and 20-years-old (32.4%) population. Also, gender-based sampling (female subjects - 60.2% and male subjects -39.8%) followed the analysis of significant studies, which emphasized that during teenage years especially females have low self-esteem, a relatively low academic self-esteem which, as they mature, improves, the concept of the academic self is more stable (Eccles et al., 1993; Gonida et al., 2006; Zanobini, Usai et al., 2002; De Fraine et al., 2007, cited in Boncu & Ceobanu, 2013, p.46).

In accordance with the objectives set, the working methods and tools were set up, aimed to ensure the sustainability of the ascertaining research, and in the context of the limited available time granted by the subjects involved in the research, they responded to the instrument used in the questionnaire survey. The research also targeted another method, the survey method based on the interview for the sample of subjects predominantly mentioned above. Through the research method based on the interview, were investigated the opinion of the subjects who preferred to respond directly to the addressed questions, that aimed the ways to improve self-esteem, especially those with low self-esteem in order to increase

academic outcomes, implicitly a healthy lifestyle, improvement of mistakes that can lead to the failure, but also the analysis of the social and psycho-pedagogical factors involved in school success/insuccess.

## 6. Findings

As a result of the observational intervention, was obtained a global image of influences that act on the self of learner.

Through the questionnaire survey, these influences were identified in learners: subjective psychological resonance, personal successes or failures, others' own opinions about themselves, and the way in which they act upon themselves. The questionnaire survey method emphasizes that 76.38% of the respondents trust their own strengths and have developed the feeling of positive self-esteem, a fundamental dimension for learners, regardless of gender, cultural diversity with the values and promoted values (Cuc, 2012a, 2012b, 2014, 2015), of interests and needs, skills and competencies or social status. From the correlation of responses, it was observed that learners with higher self-esteem are more able to cope with difficult and risk situations (88.42%), achieve their goals and know how to use alternative behaviors to those at risk.

Another relevant aspect, expressed by 83.11%, is the confidence in the way they perceive their own characteristics, which emphasizes that the young person goes through an ascending path in the development of self-knowledge, behaviors, abilities, knowledge, values, emotions, and is constantly concerned with identifying ways to improve self-esteem. 56.5% are also concerned about managing the relationship between success / failure and self-esteem, by strengthening positive self-image, by strengthening self-respect, through active participation, repudiation, motivation, involvement in educational and social activities that increase their sense of personal effectiveness and self-esteem. From this point of view 66.66% worry about the fear of failure, because in a competitive society such a result can often label an individual. Having a stable increased self-esteem and constantly contributing to its improvement by drawing realistic material, educational and professional goals that they have planned through time management, by structuring successful academic and social realistic plans adapted to educational and social needs, but also by raising awareness of their own responses to stress and the development of stress management abilities and behaviors, the fear of a possible failure can be limited and controlled by the learner. In this context, 53.7% said that the influence of successes / failures in relation to their own expectations and others, together with the opinions and expectations of others, are dimensions that adjust along the professional and social development path and by increasing the sense of valorisation, the failure can be over fulfilled. All of these statements are also based on the optimal relationship set by learners with parents: 56% highlighted that parents trust their actions, have a strong connection with family, teachers and the community; 48.6% said that parents are always proud of their accomplishments and success, support them in promoting goals, and have no exaggerated expectations of academic achievement (Dulamă & Ilovan, 2015, 2017a, 2017b), also lacking authoritarian behavior by applying material restrictions and social sanctions. Also, the same respondents pointed out that, during their development, parents did not impose unrealistic academic standards, by obtaining maximum ratings or results, did not use their punishment, threat, social isolation from the group of friends, did not neglect

them, even if some of them emigrated abroad for a higher income and living standard of the family and did not impose social models to follow.

Respondents pointed out that the emigration of parents or a family member through the annual income earned in the country of destination was associated with increasing material stability but also with increasing socio-economic status of the family in the community and this contributed to the increase of the academic results of learners and, implicitly, has led to the improvement of self-esteem. The interview in the form of a semi-structured dialogue aimed to collect data and information about the possible solutions that the interviewees have given to improve school failure as an attribute of improving self-esteem. From this point of view 83% emphasized the importance of the social factors: the family, the school institution, the community, the psycho-pedagogical factors and the bio-psycho-socio-cultural factors in the academic achievement of the educated, the way the society through the policies promoted at the level of the competent institutions is able to streamline the interaction of these factors through coherence, cursivity and flexibility.

Also 76.38% said that it is necessary to allocate a larger number of specialists for the personal development and career counselling of young people in order to achieve an active social and professional insertion; all of these counselling programs contributing to the development of lifestyle management competencies by increasing the quality of individual life of the educated, the quality of social interpersonal relationships, and by ensuring a quality of the work environment through young graduates.

Thus, it has been shown that the promotion of realistic flexible and healthy personal beliefs in the society, based on the value system contribute to increasing the quality of life of our society, to achieving a well-being for which some parents emigrated: material, emotional safety, respect and responsibility, the valorisation of the person through the unconditional acceptance of the person and those around him with differences of diversity and opinions, cooperation and collaboration in the attainment of personal and community purposes, are part of the variables that influence the growth and improvement of self-esteem and attract the success of a person, but also the success of a modern society.

## **7. Conclusion**

The obtained diagnostic study has allowed the development of a radiography in terms of the relationship between academic success and self-esteem. It is intended to develop a direction of educational action among the learners based on the relation between the academic self and the academic performance, under the influence of the model of personal growth, the development of the abilities of learners and the mutual effects (Dafinoiu & Boncu, 2014, p.47).

In the acquisition of academic successes for educated, a determining factor is also the development of communication skills, mediation and negotiation, effective solving of the problems and crisis situations with which he / she is facing, the cultivation of preventive or risk behaviors (Cuc, 2012a, 2012b, 2014, 2015), all of these being dominated by a strong sense of self-efficacy in the face of a failure in addressing a challenging new task that mobilizes the learner's capacities and abilities. In a society in which "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights), it is necessary to intervene with policies to combat social discrimination at the level of learners and of citizens to increase resistance to frustration, to improve self-confidence, personal valorisation, to

strengthen positive self-image, to increase the level of self-esteem, by increasing the sense of pride towards their achievements, all managed through an intervention based on understanding, empathy, collaboration, positive thinking, unconditional respect or acceptance (Lemeni & Miclea, 2010; Băban, 2011).

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