THE EFFECT OF SELF-ESTEEM ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Constanţa DUMITRIU [1], **Iolanda TOBOLCEA**[2], **Gh. DUMITRIU**[1]

[1] **"Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău**
[2] **"Al. I. Cuza" University of Iaşi**

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to know the effect that self-esteem has on the development of interpersonal relationships and, at the same time, on the psychosocial climate within a group.

The objectives aim at determining the self-esteem level of the participants, the evaluation of their capacity to develop human relationships with the other members of the group, as well as establishing the effect that self-esteem has on the building and the development of interpersonal relationships.

The research was carried out in 2010, on a sample of 80 students that attend the psychopedagogical module (Department of Teaching Staff Training). The methodology of the research included applying the Self-appreciation scale (Rosenberg) in order to evaluate the level of self-esteem of the participants, the psychological test that was adapted after Sydney Lecker, statistical analysis techniques and processing of the collected data. The statistical processing of the data (SPSS Programme) shows that most of the respondents have an average level of self-esteem and develop good interpersonal relationships with the other members of the group in order to solve professional tasks, thus making a contribution to the creation and the maintaining of a psychosocial climate that is favorable to communication, cooperation, task focusing.

Key words: self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, psychosocial climate, self evaluation.

The domain of the psychology of the Self is perceived as a field of theoretical and experimental confrontations that has involved, during the last century, a considerable number of researchers interested in deciphering the various aspects of the human being. Therefore, the terminology used in revealing the mechanisms of the Self (self, self image, self-esteem, self awareness, self-knowledge etc.) is related to psychoanalysis, humanistic psychology, social psychology, particularly the American one.

As a basic dimension of personality, self-esteem is related to the relation that each human subject has with himself, the confidence in one's own ability to think and act independently, autonomously, to take decisions in order to reach goals, to assert one's needs, aspirations, to aspire to and fight for their accomplishment.

The literature and the studies carried out in this field highlight the effect of self-esteem on the efficiency of all categories of activities. Subjects with high self-esteem are very confident in their abilities, they develop communication relationships easily, they are assertive, open, they get involved and muster in the activity, they succeed in reaching their goals, they reach success, all these consolidating their positive self image. The person's motivation and, particularly, the positive and frequent consolidation of the person in relation to the other members of the group constitute a strong factor of interpersonal attraction and closeness. Interpersonal relationships are the result of the interaction between some personality traits (strength of the ego, self image, self-esteem) and psychosocial factors (exchange of ideas, opinions, attitudes, values) that take place in multiple social contexts (family, school, work). In the dynamics of social interactions, there occur various and complex exchanges of knowledge, feelings, influences, resources, messages, rewards and punishments that can influence, in their turn, a person's self-esteem.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The literature on the problems of the Self and the Ego highlights different positions that range from denial of the existence of the Ego (behaviorism), to placing the Ego within the subconscious (psychoanalysis), and to emphasizing the central role of the ego as the nucleus of personality, its unity and its stability. One may notice the multitude of significations given to the concepts of "self", "ego", their insufficient differentiation from the terms "self identity", "self-esteem", "self image", the approach

from different levels of generality to the forms of the Ego etc.

Thus, in Vocabularul psihanalizei (Laplanche and Pontalis,1994, p.402), the self is defined, from a psychoanalytical perspective, as the "pulsating pole of personality", its contents being psychic expressions of "some inherited and inborn, other repressed and acquired" pulses. For Freud, the Self is the main reservoir of psychic energy, coming into conflict with the Ego and the Superego, which genetically represents its differentiations.

Socially speaking, the concept of self is the "structure that associates the information an individual may access concerning one's own being and the intra- and interpersonal processes involved in the cognitive, affective and social administration of this information" (Marele dicţionar al psihologiei, Larousse, 2006, p. 1126). Most of the times, the self is defined as the ensemble of data that an individual may access concerning one's own being. The information about the self received by the person is related to self perception, as it is provided by the social environment through self-observation or cognitive self-control.

Some authors have approached the concept of self from a perspective opposite to that of Freud, claiming that the self is not inborn but occurs within the frame of social experience by reference to the Other, by intercommunication, cooperation, relationships within the group. The concept of self is the mental representation of the personal features that each individual refers to in order to define himself and to adjust his behavior. The individual may attribute himself characteristics belonging to various registers: activities, roles, personality traits, physical traits, values, interests, attitudes, goals etc.

In Dictionary of Psychology Oxford (Colman, 2006, p. 679), self-esteem is defined as "a person's attitude towards oneself, or the person's opinion, self-assessment that can be positive, negative or neutral).

Self image, highlights P. Iluţ, is strongly affected by the subject's aspirations and ideals, by his expectations. V. Gecas considers that "above the assessments related to identities and particular domains, but below the level of general, global self-esteem, people tend to assess themselves on a middle rank", the most significant criteria that they relate themselves to being competence and morality (apud. Iluţ, 2001, p. 24).

Starting from these theoretical premises, we intend to find the effect that self-esteem has upon the development of interpersonal relationships and implicitly, upon the psychosocial climate of the group.

Research objectives:

1. Determining the level of self-esteem of students who are preparing for the didactic career.

2. Assessing the ability to develop positive interpersonal relationships with group colleagues.

3. Establishing the effect that self-esteem has upon building and developing interpersonal relationships, verifying the existence of a correlation between the two variables.

The research methodology has included the application of the Scale of self-appreciation (Rosenberg) with a view to assessing the participants' level of self-esteem, the psychological test for assessing the subjects' capacity to develop interpersonal relations, methods and statistical techniques for processing the collected data (the SPSS Programme).

The Scale of self-appreciation [Rosenberg, 1965] is a scale of the Likert type, structured on 10 items, 5 of which are directly measured and 5 are reversed, that measure the general feeling of personal value, that is, global self-esteem. It is one of the best-known scales that has been validated through self-esteem studies. Each item is evaluated by the subject on a scale from 1 to 4: (1 - strong disagreement; 2 - disagreement; 3 - agreement, 4 – strong agreement). The minimum number of points that can be obtained is 10, signifying a very low level of self-esteem, the maximum number of points is 40, meaning a very high level of self-esteem. It can be applied individually or collectively.

The psychological test "Interpersonal relationships: have you humanized them?" has been adapted after Sidney Lecker (Liviu Chelcea, în Neculau, 2003, pp. 99 – 102). By means of it, one can assess the ability to develop positive interpersonal relationships with work colleagues. It is structured on 15 items, the subject having to circle one of the three alternatives associated with each assertion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was carried out in 2010, on a sample of 80 students who attend our Department of Teaching Staff Training. According to the gender variable, 78.8% are of the feminine gender, and 21.3% of the masculine gender. According to the residence environment variable, 51.2% are from the rural environment, 48.8% are from the urban environment.

Concerning the level of self-esteem, the statistical data processing (the SPSS Programme) highlights high scores of participants regarding the level of self-esteem, ranging from 28 to 40. The calculations led to the values integrated in Table 1. One may notice the fact that the average has the value of 31,12 (the norm value being 28.8), and the standard deviation is 2.67, less than the norm value of 4.3.

By relating to the same norm of the Rosenberg scale, we have proceeded to grouping the total levels into three categories: low scores

(below 23 points), average (between 24-33 points) and high scores (above 33 points).

Thus, 69 of the participants, representing 86.25% of the entire sample group, have got scores between 24 and 33, which signifies an average

level of self-esteem, and 11 participants, representing 13,75%, have got scores between 34 and 40, signifying a high level of self-esteem.

Table 1

Indices of the central value

Statistics		Self esteem	Interpersonal relationships
N	Valid	80	80
	Missing	0	0
Mean		31.1250	32.4875
Std. Deviation		2.67844	2.16995
Variance		7.17405	4.70870
Skewness		1.570	-.204
Std. error of Skewness		.269	.269
Kurtosis		2.701	-.375
Std. error of Kurtosis		.532	.532
Minimum		28.00	28.00
Maximum		40.00	38.00

None of the participants got scores below 28, which is a significant fact if we take into account the role of self-knowledge in the progressive structuring and development of the psycho-pedagogic skills of the future teachers, the

role of metacognition, perception, self-esteem and self image in the structure of the teacher's personality and the efficient exertion of their professional functions and roles.
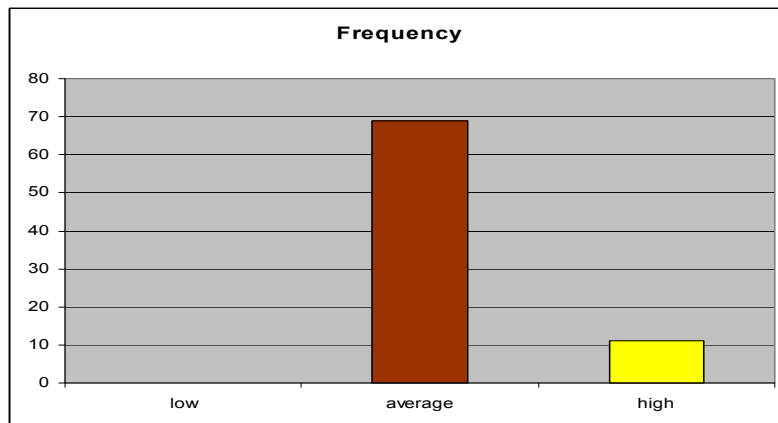

Figure 1 **Level of self-esteem**

Concerning the interpersonal relationships developed by the 80 participants with their activity colleagues, we find that no subject has got scores below 26, the largest percentage being represented by the subjects with scores between 26 and 35, respectively 76 participants, representing 95 % of the research sample.

A number of 4 participants got scores between 36 and 45, which highlights a very good level of relating as far as the group is concerned, authentic communication, responsible cooperation

and participation, contributing thus to the creation and maintenance of a favorable psychosocial climate within the programme of professional training.

In agreement with the research objectives, we then checked statistically whether there is any positive correlation between the participants' level of self-esteem and the level of development of interpersonal relationships by calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient r *(tab. 2)*.

Table 2

Correlations

		Self-esteem	Interpersonal relations
Self-esteem	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.403[**]
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	80.000	80
Interpersonal relations	Pearson Correlation	.403[**]	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	80	80.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

From the *Correlations* table we notice that there is a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and the nature, the quality of interpersonal relations, r(78) **=** 0.40, p < 0.01. Therefore, we may conclude that an average or high level of self-esteem has a positive effect upon the development of good and very good interpersonal relationships with work colleagues, with a positive impact upon the group climate.

CONCLUSIONS

The statistical data processing emphasizes the fact that most of the respondents have an average level of self-esteem and develop good interpersonal relationships with colleagues for the purpose of accomplishing professional tasks, contributing thus to the creation and maintenance of a psychosocial climate favorable to communication, cooperation and task focusing.

The calculation of statistical indices reveals a correspondence of the recorded values concerning the participants' self-esteem and the values concerning the manifestation of interpersonal relationships.

There is a positive significant correlation between self-esteem and the nature, the quality of interpersonal relationships, r (78) **=**0.40, p< 0.01.

The collected data, as well as the conclusions drawn can be used in designing and carrying out some formative processes aiming at increasing self-esteem and building positive interpersonal relationships. Developing assertive communication by increasing the weight of interactive methods and techniques that facilitate learning, numerous verbal and useful exchanges, productive interactions and dissonances, the systematic application of self-assessment techniques have benefic effects in building the self image of the future teachers, in adjusting one's representations about oneself, in developing the Ego.

Becoming aware of communication barriers, overcoming the psychological and social distance facilitate the consolidation of assertive communication skills and the empathetic capacity. By means of self-evaluation exercises (How do colleagues, teachers treat me? What kind of climate do I generate around me? Am I taken seriously and respected?), we contribute to the increase of respect and self confidence, to the overcoming of certain inhibitions and the exercise of an authentic control over our own existence.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Colman, A. M., 2006 - *Dictionary of Psychology*, Oxford, University Press.
Iluţ, P., 2001 - *Sinele şi cunoaşterea lui. Teme actuale de psihosociologie,* Polirom, Iaşi.
Laplanche, J., Pontalis, J.-B., 1994 - *Vocabularul psihanalizei*, traducere, Humanitas, Bucureşti.
Neculau, A., 2003 - *Cunoaşte-l pe celălalt*, Polirom, Iaşi, p. 99-103.
* * *, 1991 - *Grand dictionnaire de la psychologie*, (dir. Bloch, H., Chemama, R.), Larousse, Paris, cedex o6, p. 702.
* * *, 2006 - *Marele dicţionar al psihologiei Larousse*, traducere, Dragomir, S., Zamfirescu, V. D. (ed.), Editura Trei, Bucureşti.