

On Enhancing Self-Esteem among Students

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Abstract

Self-esteem means an essential human need that is vital for survival and normal healthy development. It arises automatically from within based upon a person's beliefs and consciousness. Self-esteem occurs in conjunction with a person's thoughts, behaviours, feelings, and actions. The importance of this investigation is to explore some existing factors for possessing low Self-esteem as well as some intervention strategies to be applied in group to enhance the level of Self-esteem of students of engineering colleges. The study presents a frame work of Scales to assess Self-esteem developed by the investigator.

KEYWORDS: Self-esteem, Intervention strategies, Self-assessment and group activities

Introduction

Self -Esteem is considered as one of the important affective factors because success or failure of a person depends mostly on the degrees of one's Self-esteem. It reflects a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth. It is often perceived as a personality trait, which tends to be stable and enduring. Self-esteem is the positive or negative evaluation of self-knowledge that is included in our self-concept (Rosenberg, 1979, in MacIntyre, et al, 1999). Self-esteem involves beliefs and emotions about the self, such as the appraisal of one's own appearance, opinions, views, sentiments and behaviours.

As a social psychological construct, it is attractive because researchers have conceptualized it as an influential predictor of appropriate outcomes, such as academic accomplishment or applying behaviour. In addition, it is also been treated as an important outcome due to its close relation with emotional well-being. Successful activity always happened with some degree of Self-esteem. The degree of our Self-esteem has reflective effects on our lives. It has profound effects on our rational thinking processes, emotions, desires, choices and goals.

Need for the study

A review of related literature showed that there were several studies done on school but on college students particularly, on technical students only a small number of studies have been done. The need for the study is felt due to inadequacies of researches in this area. Most of the studies reviewed were descriptive and some focused only on the reasons for possessing low Self-esteem among the students. Further, the investigator felt through her 15 years of experience, she came across many Engineering students displaying low Self-esteem. Therefore a study was conducted employing Intervention Strategies with scale to enhance the level of Self-esteem of engineering students.

Objectives

The major objective of the study is to enhance the level of Self-esteem of students of engineering colleges.

Existing Factors for low Self-esteem

Generally in many colleges teachers identify students possess a very low Self-esteem level in the classes. One of the major problems is Communicative competency in using second language. Self-esteem has a direct link with Communicative Competency. Shyness and fear of losing face for making mistakes are the most dreadful enemies to the development of oral skills. People with low Self-esteem are more sensitive to environmental cues. Hence, they will be easily affected by the possible things which will happen to them, especially the negative comment, such as ridicule, deride etc.,. In order to protect themselves, the persons with low Self-esteem intend to avoid the situations in which their Self-esteem might be threatened. This is one of the reasons; the students are unwilling to communicate using the second language under many circumstances. On the contrary, people with high Self-esteem are not easily affected by the environmental cues. They are so self-confident in that they can make great contribution to others and they believe that they will be respected by others. So, they are eager to express their opinions and willing to communicate. Self-esteem usually exerts its impact through other communication variables like communication apprehension and perceived communication competence. The other factors for possessing low Self-esteem are low confidence level, deprived encouragement, introvert behaviour, deprived atmosphere where they can't get opportunities for practice, deprived sense of security, identity, belongingness, purpose, personal competence and positive testing.

Methodology

The study was confined to the First Year Engineering students of Saranathan College of Engineering, Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu, India possessing low Self-esteem. The study was a single group, Pre-Test – Treatment – Post-Test experimental design with Intervention Strategies to enhance Self-esteem. The Intervention Strategies are independent variable and enhanced Self-esteem is dependent variable. Observation, interaction and discussion were the approaches employed to make the study more empirical.

Intervention strategies to enhance the level of Self-esteem

An enhanced Self-esteem level in a student is a kind of comprehensive project demanding efforts of all-round aspects. There are different strategies in enhancing students' Self-esteem. Some of them are given here;

a. Building Confidence by improving their Communicative Competencies

Confidence is the key to success in doing anything, which is especially true with learning of a language. The facilitator, therefore, should keep this in mind and try to build up students' confidence by developing their "communicative competencies". The students must be given a special attention to the following things: Strengthening the students' awareness of the importance of communicative competence, and explicating with them the characteristics of their English studies so as to make them realize their great potential of developing oral skills and the advantageous factors to do so. The facilitator should pay attention to students' different learning backgrounds, because students' speaking abilities varied greatly; some have problems with basic pronunciation, modulation and intonation. Facilitators must have the tolerance of such difference with main attention paid to transmission of information rather than to correcting pronouncing errors.

b. Providing Encouragement

Constant encouragements must be provided to the students by giving positive comments and timely compliments to those who participate in any oral activity and those who did anything correctly or made even slight progress. From such feedback from the facilitators, the students are inspired and glad to see the fact. With perseverance, they are sure to improve gradually and steadily and achieve eventual success. The facilitator reminding students of the facts that mistakes are not as terrible as they think and making mistakes is unavoidable in foreign language learning. In fact, making errors and mistakes is a natural part of the learning process and learn from and improve with mistake making and correcting.

c. Getting students to know each other

The facilitator must try to build up a rapport between facilitators and students and among students themselves. In an informal atmosphere, students psychologically feel more ease at doing classroom activities. To avoid face-threatening acts, the tasks for oral practice follow in order and advance step by step. It is desirable for the facilitator to suit the tasks or questions to the students' competence and not to ask individual students questions that may be too difficult for them to answer. The students will receive a sense of achievements, when they will be rewarded for having a good oral practice and are getting appreciation for correctly answering the questions. It will help overwhelm their feeling of shyness, apprehension and nervousness, a necessary step to confidence promotion.

d. Creating language atmosphere and providing opportunities for practice

When the students are overcoming the fear of failure are ready to open their mouths for oral practice. Now it is the facilitators' job to create an atmosphere in which students can be stimulated to practice as much as possible. Speaking also requires sufficient practice like other language skills and speaking ability can be developed only through frequent oral use of the particular language. The facilitators and students can make mutual and joint efforts to create the same or similar environment in the classroom as in a natural language acquisition context, so as to achieve sufficient exposure to the target language to the maximum. Classroom activities must connect language learning to real life and so give full play to the essential function of language through using transmitting information and exchanging ideas. Integrating the training of speaking with the exercise for receptive skills serves another way to greatly increase opportunities for students to orally use the language.

f. Positive effect of testing

To ensure students' consistent efforts to develop their oral skills, positive effect of testing could be administered. To ensure the positive effect of testing, facilitators can use continuous assessment, so that students' performance in speaking and listening work throughout the course can be closely observed and assessed. The assessment is longitudinally rather than horizontally done; that is, instead of comparing the differences in oral abilities between students, attention is paid to the level of progress an individual student has made during the course.

g. Fostering the sense of security in students

The sense of security is fostered by treating young people with respect and establishing environments where individuals know what is expected of them and where they feel safe and secured. This can be done by enforcing them in a consistent manner without intimidating or degrading students through clear rules and regulations.

h. Fostering the sense of identity

The sense of identity is important for behaviour that is consistent with how one sees one self. This is sometimes referred to as the Pygmalion concept or the self-fulfilling prophecy. For example, those who see themselves as not lovable tend to reject others before they themselves are vetoed. Developing a positive identity requires that students feel secure and accepted or loved by those adults with whom they work. Humans need to feel a sense of personal worth. Having a facilitator, a parent or someone that really cares is important in developing that sense of personal significance and worth. The individual begin to develop the sense of personal worth, when they feel secure and they are more open to accept the reality of their unique strengths and weaknesses, and value their uniqueness. Thus, in the identity component students engage in self-evaluation to identify their strengths and weaknesses and consider how they might capitalize on their strengths.

i. Fostering the sense of belongingness

The sense of belonging or connectedness is of great significance since feeling excluded by others is perhaps the greatest detriment to Self-esteem. All students want to feel accepted and supported by others. They need to feel that they are part of an organization or a group which is larger than them. Being a member of a captivating team or a superior organization is one way of providing this feeling. Hence, students must get opportunities to connect or bond with others and learn the social skills that enable them to work cooperatively with others. One of the major keys to get boosted Self-esteem is feeling valued by others. Therefore, Students can be encouraged to be of service to others for this is a great way to feel valued and appreciated.

j. Building the sense of purpose

Young students need to see the relevance of what they are studying and direct their efforts to achieve specific goals. Facilitators can contribute to this sense of purpose by helping them to create visions of what they want to achieve or what kind of person they wish to become. A sense of veracity develops when individuals are clear about their values and see the value of behaving in ways that are consistent with those values

k. Developing the sense of personal competence

Facilitators can assist by pointing out options and possible ways of attaining the goals that have been set and by providing encouragement, support and feedback. As individuals are taught how to use the resources available to them to attain their goals, they grow in the sense of personal competence. As they begin to make conclusions for themselves and successfully achieve what they set out to do, it fosters feelings of competence.

Findings and Suggestions

Intervention Strategies developed by the investigator have significantly enhanced the Self-esteem among engineering students. The investigator observed that the students, who served as the sample for the research, communicate well with their peer group and faculty with confidence. The colleagues of the facilitator handling classes for the students, who were sample for the study, reported that the students now take better initiative, and take up responsibilities willingly. So it is viewed that the change that the Intervention Strategies have brought about on the erstwhile low Esteem students. The collective response from the students revealed gain in certain learning aspects. During the investigation most of the students were very much interested and completed all the activities with ease and confidence. The activities promoted self-study among the students. The intervention strategies used by the investigator made

the students develop inquisitiveness in learning second language with better confidence. As a result of implementation of Intervention Strategies, the students have understood the content, developed mutual understanding, learnt co-operation; ready to do volunteered activities and to help each other. It is suggested that students from slum areas, tribal pockets and interior rural areas who exhibit low Self-esteem may be identified in the first month of first semester and given appropriate activities for building better self-image.

This will be a useful investment for their future. The educated unemployables will become employable if their Self-esteem is given a boost through similar interventions.

Conclusion

When the above strategies are used again and again on individual, one might get growth in personal effectiveness and Self-esteem. They become internally motivated, see multiple ways of solving problems, become less dependent upon others, become more open to challenges the stimulation of worthwhile goals and demonstrate more initiative in taking command and control of their lives. As Maslow, the eminent psychologist rightly told, humans need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. All humans have a need to be respected and to have Self-esteem and self-respect. Individuals need to engage themselves to achieve recognition. The investigator strongly believes that the outcome of this study will definitely help the students of engineering to enhance Self-esteem.

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