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On Self-Esteem as a Predictor for a Future Profession in the Field of Communication

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Abstract: Even if the priority of educational training is intellectual development, its purpose is also aimed at training people who have skills for their future profession. Many articles and research have focused on students and their learning environment studying what helps them or not to access the professions for which they have been trained. One of the most important factors contributing to school success is self-esteem because self-esteem interferes with good academic learning. The development of self-esteem is shaped by life-long learning experiences, the dynamic process of individual perspective and the qualities of the self. However, the culture and social context have proven to be factors that interfere with self-esteem interpretations because when society's expectations do not match with their actual performance, the self-esteem can be affected.

Keywords: self-esteem interpretations; society's expectations; intellectual development

1. The Importance of Self-Esteem

Learning environments, self-esteem and resilience are among the major factors in the success of students in urban schools. According to the findings (Akin & Radford, 2018, p. 15) a major factor for the establishment and development of resilience by students in urban educational environments is the positive role of *the teaching staff*, which contributes to the positive self-esteem development of students.

An interesting view is that of the authors Pyszczynski and Kesebir (2013, p. 126) who believe that self-esteem and culture are *man-made shields against existential anxiety*, self-esteem being strongly *dependent on the cultural worldview* from which it derives. Cultural context is in their view a factor of analysis in relation to self-esteem: for example, if most students in a college increase their self-esteem when

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they score high on tests, this might be a meaningless achievement for a Tibetan monk. As a cultural creation, self-esteem relates to the conformity of the values that are part of the person's culture and to the belief in the worldview from which these standards originate (Pyszczynski & Kesebir, 2013, p. 127).

Another study (Yanti, și alții, 2012, p. 582) examined the relationship between self-esteem and academic performance of students in the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Medicine. The correlation between self-esteem and academic performance was analyzed using Pearson's correlation and linear regression, with the results showing that *students with higher self-esteem have better academic performance*. In conclusion, this study identified self-esteem as one of the key factors in shaping an individual's academic performance, more significantly than other factors such as stress and body image. The results of this study did not identify significant differences between gender and self-esteem.

According to the study carried out by the authors Duraku and Hoxha (2018, p. 5) on the level of some Kosovar students, *self-esteem is identified as a predictor that contributes to academic performance*, the high level of self-esteem being associated with successful students, and this finding confirms the results of previous studies in the field.

Another study (Afari, Ward, & Khine, 2012) investigated the relationships between *global self-esteem, academic self-efficacy* and *academic performance* among a sample of 255 students in the United Arab Emirates and the correlated results indicated the existence of significant relationships between global self-esteem values and academic self-efficacy.

M. Ali Ghufron's research (2016) showed that students who have high self-esteem have better writing skills than those who have low self-esteem. In formulating his thesis, Ghufron (2016, p. 41) started from the writing process which requires the development of skills to express and arrange ideas in a written text that should be understood by any reader. In the writing process, some students feel confident, others feel challenged, and others feel burdened, feelings that arise as a result of the influence of their self-esteem.

Self-esteem is strongly influenced by the external world, it is an attitude about oneself, and it is related to beliefs about one's own aptitudes, abilities, social relationships, and future outcomes (Ghufron, 2016, p. 41).

Interhuman relations are an important indicator for several characteristic elements of the person, including the professional orientation of the individual. Although self-

esteem makes people feel good, it has few tangible benefits because high self-esteem does not lead to important improvement in social behavior (eg. high academic achievement, good job performance, leadership). Nor does low self-esteem necessarily lead to undesirable behaviors (for example, violence, smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use) (Pyszczynski & Kesebir, 2013, p. 132).

However, if we try to speculate about the students' vision of their own future and what their prospects are, we can easily imagine, based on studies in the field, that people with low self-esteem see their future as bleak and threatening, and people with high self-esteem see their future bright and friendly.

The vision of the person with low self-esteem, on his professional future is not only one of anticipated failure, but one of anticipated professional frustrations (Rosenberg, p. 238). The insecure youth, inhibited by his fear of making mistakes, will tend to avoid competition, responsibility, and leadership positions. Anxiety, depression, lack of concentration and interpersonal difficulties of people with low self-esteem will interfere with achieving occupational success. But the thing that makes them want success so strongly is the very low self-esteem that contributes to the anticipation of failure and very likely helps to produce failure. Thus, their emotional stress increases because their potential to find a job is reduced by low self-esteem.

In this way, Rosenberg (1965, p. 238) believes that people with low self-esteem have a desire to achieve professional prestige and think in the following way: *“If I were to have a higher position in society, I think I would have a better opinion of myself/The best way to make people think well of me is to be successful”*, meaning that by commanding the respect and admiration of others, it would boost their self-esteem.

As for the person with high self-esteem, he is also eager to get ahead, but his situation is relatively fortunate because he is more likely to expect to succeed, but less likely to be disappointed in the event of failure. The young person who has self-confidence and is not afraid of failure is more likely to use his full creative potential, is comfortable in competitive situations, takes responsibility and is always looking for leadership positions.

2. Possible Correlations of Self-Esteem with Communication Skills

From the perspective of several theories, communication has multiple meanings and roles. Thus, either the emphasis is only on the process (the general theory of information), or on the creation of reality and systems of representations (the constructivist theory), or on the structure and functions of language (theories of semiotics) (Cristea, 2015). However, in order not to neglect the psychological side of the communication process, it is considered (Cristea, 2015) that this is not missing from any social situation in which people invest affective components, influence and action (psychosocial theory).

Preparing professionals to work in any sector means matching educational skills with professional requirements. Knowing the demands of the communication and public relations labor market creates the opportunity to provide the most relevant education leading to early employment of professionals. In the study by Meganck, Smith and Guidry (2020), one thousand job advertisements were analyzed from the perspective of the most common requirements of the employers in the market necessary for the qualification in the field of public relations at the entry level. This study reaffirms the relevance of traditional skills such as written communication, but also highlights skills needed in digital and social media. The study demonstrates the existence of a significant demand for transversal skills such as organizational skills, leadership skills and the ability to work in a team.

Thus, the study by Meganck, Smith, and Guidry (2020, p. 2) analyzes the specific job skills listed in entry-level public relations job postings to determine the top skills in demand when young professionals apply for jobs. This information is important to inform industries about the top sought general competencies, as well as to guide the competencies and skills that academic institutions should focus on when working with undergraduate public relations students.

A study of public relations students at nine universities found that students feel better prepared for skills such as credibility, computer skills, ethics and leadership skills, and feel less prepared in areas such as new technologies, financial and budgeting skills, crisis skills and planning.

Transversal skills such as organizational skills, leadership skills and the ability to work in a team were also frequently requested by employers. Several previous studies have supported the demand for transversal skills to complement solid professional skills (Brunner, Zarkin, & Yates, 2018).

Therefore, the college should focus on increasing these transversal skills in students through problem-based learning assignments, oral presentations, group projects, and community client projects, as well as extracurricular experiences such as be studies abroad and internships (Meganck, Smith, & Guidry, 2020).

Thus, it was found that, beyond written communication skills, transversal skills in social/digital media, the ability to work in a team, leadership skills, organizational skills and graphic design skills are also important. These are all skills needed to communicate strategically, but there are also skills needed to communicate strategically that have not been as frequently requested by employers, such as strategic thinking, creative thinking and research skills (Meganck, Smith, & Guidry, 2020, p. 6).

The occupational structure at the level of specializations in Romania from the COR code (Romanian Occupations Code), includes detailed descriptions of over 4500 of occupations. Thus, it is unlikely to predict the occupational choice of an individual based on self-esteem, but we can analyze the relationship between self-esteem and other variables that orient the individual towards the field of work and the field of a specialization (values, aspirations, expectations).

From the perspective of the values and needs attached to the occupation of public relations specialist¹, those stated in the occupational profile can be taken into account, among them: achievement, independence, working conditions, relationships. Among the stated necessary skills we mention: speaking, active listening, critical thinking, understanding the read texts.

From the perspective of the occupational values of the individual, those stated in the occupational profile can be taken into account on the one hand, but it is also necessary to know the expectations of future practitioners in the field.

On the other hand, the skills obtained as a result of training in the field of public relations specialization are also very important. In this sense, there are a series of specialized professional skills that are included in the mandatory area of training in higher education, respectively: *Identification and use of language, methodologies and specialized knowledge in the field of communication sciences; The use of new information and communication technologies; Identification and use of communication strategies, methods and techniques in the public relations process;*

¹ https://www.rubinian.com/cor_6_ocupatia_detalii.php?id=243201 accessed on 1.04.2023.

Creating and promoting a public relations product; Specialized assistance in managing crisis communication and/or mediating communication conflicts¹.

From the perspective of transversal specialized skills that are included in the mandatory area of training in higher education, among which we mention: *Solving in a realistic way - with both theoretical and practical arguments - some usual professional situations, with a view to their effective and deontological solution; The application of effective work techniques in the multidisciplinary team with the performance of certain tasks on hierarchical levels; Self-assessment of the need for professional training for the purpose of insertion and adaptation to the requirements of the labor market².*

3. Self-Esteem and Public Relations

The issue of self-esteem is a very different one when seen from different points of view. From the individual's point of view, low self-esteem can degenerate into a tragedy composed of feelings of incapacity, inadequacy, inhibition, depression, tension, anxiety and deforming the lives of those affected by it. From the societal point of view, low self-esteem has clear implications for the functioning of a democratic system that cannot rely on ignorant people, uninvolved in societal life, and non-influential groups.

People tend to accept the opinions we have of ourselves and if we communicate to them in our way and actions that we are good, they will probably think we are good, but if we show that we think ourselves unworthy, they may agree that we are right (Rosenberg, 1965, p. 239).

On the other end of the spectrum, it appears that people with low intelligence are generally more persuasive than people with high intelligence, those with moderate levels of self-esteem are generally more persuasive than people with low self-esteem, or high, and younger people are more susceptible to persuasive communication than older people (Vargas & Yoon, 2004, p. 63). The individual's self-concept can influence both his participation in society and his professional activities. There are theories regarding the relationship between self-esteem and public affairs, dating back as far as Rosenberg (1965).

¹ <http://www.anc.edu.ro/registrul-national-al-calificarilor-din-invatamantul-superior-ncis/> accessed on 1.04.2023.

² <http://www.anc.edu.ro/registrul-national-al-calificarilor-din-invatamantul-superior-ncis/> accessed on 01.04.2023.

Rosenberg's study (1965, p. 221) showed that self-esteem is a predominant inhibitory factor that can dampen interest in public affairs and the outside world and reduce the likelihood of expressing one's opinions. Thus, people with low self-esteem are less likely to express interest in public affairs, to follow such events in the media, to have concrete knowledge about such matters, to actively and frequently discuss about these topics in groups of friends or to be public opinion leaders.

Public affairs is an integral part of public relations functions, as a subfield of them that is reflected in the activities carried out by non-governmental and governmental organizations, political organizations, media trusts, advertising agencies, public relations agencies, lobbying and advocacy agencies, marketing agencies. All these fields and sub-fields basically use tools, strategies and techniques of public influence, activism and solidarity for the development of public policies in relation to maintaining the reputation of the organization. For this reason, Rosenberg's study (1965) refers to the political influence part of these organizations, the political environment being the one that affects the functioning and organizational climate of any public or private companies.

Rosenberg's research data (1965, p. 207) indicates that people with low self-esteem are relatively uninterested in political matters, do not follow national or international news in newspapers, radio or television, do not know or are interested in current political figures, and do not participate in political discussions.

We could deduce from this by extrapolation that they are not even interested in working in this area of public affairs. We can also interpret the fact that a person with low self-esteem is unlikely to become an opinion leader, while a person with high self-esteem has multiple chances to become an opinion leader or political leader being sought quite often to express his point of view.

As it is already known, face-to-face interpersonal communication, or more recently even online, is an important source of influence in any field, especially political, and the social roles of communicators are useful for organizations that want to establish themselves in a certain field (spokesperson, opinion leader, public relations specialist, etc.). The consultancy that these specialists offer to organizations is not only remarkable at a conceptual level (creativity in discourse, content writing, image consultancy, etc.) but also at a subliminal level through the application of influence techniques (social responsibility, public policies for the public interest, reputation management, influencing decision-making factors, etc.).

From the perspective of reputation, it has been observed that people with high self-esteem think well, make a good impression, are often admired and respected by others, and people with low self-esteem are less capable of self-criticism than those with high self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965, p. 27).

Regarding the citizen's involvement in discussions about the public interest, teenagers are assimilated to the apathetic citizen, having a lack of interest in participating in discussions about matters of national or international importance, lack of interest in information from the mass media, they very rarely assume roles of influence or dominance in such subjects. That is why it is very important that self-esteem is shaped from early childhood, in order to contribute to the foundation of the future adult's own values in a democratic society.

In the same area as teenagers are people with low self-esteem who interpret public interest discussions as an interpersonal threat, being inhibited, insecure and avoid expressing opinions for fear of making a bad impression. This is translated by Rosenberg (1965) as *a lack of confidence in interpersonal impact*, the lower the individual's level of self-esteem, the less confidence he has in the value of his own contribution or the less confidence he has in how he is perceived by others as having value.

Creativity, the ability to give free speeches in public and spontaneity are qualities necessary for a good communicator. A person with low self-esteem, in such situations, would be overwhelmed by his own thoughts (What do others think of me? How do they evaluate me? What impression do I make?) which would block and inhibit the free expression of ideas. Thus what prevents those with low self-esteem from becoming good communicators is fear and a sense of threat, which are fatal to spontaneity and which undermine confidence in the impact of their opinions.

To understand the psychological functioning of the person with low self-esteem, we can imagine that he always tends to reflect his own interests inward, which causes him to accumulate anxiety about actively participating in public affairs and attend its internal issues.

4. Conclusions

A person's self-concept plays an important role in social interactions because a person's self-view extends to attitudes and behavior. Self-esteem is self-revealing through behavior. Adaptation to society and social acceptance require high self-esteem to avoid behavioral discomforts caused by maladjustment.

At the same time, self-esteem is a predictor of motivation, performance and satisfaction and well-being at work (De Cremer, van Dijke, van Knippenberg, & Bos, 2006), as an indicator of how employees think and make decisions. Many articles and researches have focused on students and their learning environment studying what helps them or not to be accepted for professions for which they have prepared.

Analyzing the possibilities and variant correlations of self-esteem, it also correlates with other aspects of a person's personality, such as competitiveness, teamwork and leadership.

Even if we cannot generalize, we can state that, from a theoretical point of view, people with low self-esteem are less interested in active participation in public affairs, an aspect that qualifies them as unsuitable for a profession in the field of public communication. Because they are absorbed in their own psychological problems, they tend to distract themselves from larger matters of social importance. However, it is not excluded that they are suitable for the back-office area of the industry where they can prove their creativity.

In conclusion, school performance can be considered an indicator for career success, but this aspect is not enough. Self-esteem, indeed studied at this level of impact on school performance, indicates significant correlations, but career success is not necessarily ensured only by the two indicators. Thus, it is superficial to consider that a person with high self-esteem will be successful in their chosen career, but from this point of view we can consider that high school performance contributes, at least on a theoretical level, to a person's career success.

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