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Low Self-Esteem, Achievement, and Attribution:
A Multidimensional Approach

Talar Agopian

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Social & Behavioral Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Education – Emphasis Counseling at Haigazian University

Beirut – Lebanon

June 2, 2010

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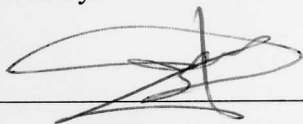
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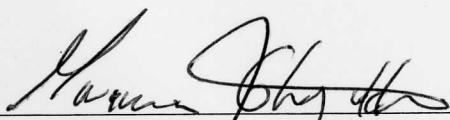
Low Self-Esteem, Achievement, and Attribution:
A Multidimensional Approach

*To my brother, Varian Agopian, for his constant support, help
and encouragement in everything I do*
Talar Agopian

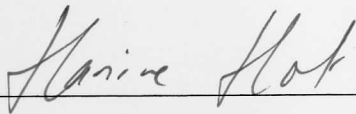
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First, I would like to thank God for giving me the opportunity to study.

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*To my brother, Vartan Agopian, for his constant support, help
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Many thanks to Dr. [Name] for his [Name] work.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents and brother who stood by me and encouraged me every step of the way.

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the variables of self-esteem, academic achievement, and attributional style, and shed light on the particular group of low self-esteem students who have high academic achievement. It sought to explain why these students maintain a low self-esteem despite continuous success in the academic domain. It relied on self-report measures where participants ($N = 100$) were asked to provide their academic average and fill in the following questionnaires: the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Self-Esteem Questionnaire, and the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale. In addition, participants were given three short stories to read followed by the State Self-Esteem Scale. The stories presented successful events in the social, family, and academic domains and were used as a multidimensional intervention model. Results were computed using analyses of correlations, regression, and variance, and t -tests. Results of this study showed that low self-esteem students tend to have an external attributional style, and that academic average positively correlates only with the school dimension of self-esteem, which might explain why self-esteem remains low in spite of academic success.

Low Self-Esteem, Achievement, and Attribution: A Multidimensional Approach

Research over the years has revealed relationships amongst the different constructs of self-esteem, academic achievement, and locus of control. Self-esteem reflects how one views oneself, evaluates one's worth, regards one's abilities and defines one's self-efficacy and self-confidence. Therefore, how students view themselves may have an effect on their academic achievement, and, in turn, academic achievement may have an effect on how students view themselves. This certainly does not mean that students who have high self-esteem also have high grades, or that students who get low grades have low self-esteem. In reality, there are students with high self-esteem and yet get low grades, and students with low self-esteem who obtain high grades. This study concerns this last group of students: those who consistently get high grades, while their self-esteem remains low. A major question regarding low self-esteem students with high academic achievement suggests itself: why the self-esteem of students who constantly get high grades does not improve with time and consequently they become similar to high self-esteem students, who evaluate themselves and their abilities positively?

Recent research has focused on the fact that self-esteem is not a unidimensional concept, and various studies have revealed different dimensions of self-esteem, such as peer, school, family, sports, and body image. A student's self-view comprises many dimensions, but the question of the present study concerns the relationship between academic achievement and each of these dimensions.

The construct internal-external locus of control was developed from Rotter's social learning theory in 1954. According to Rotter, people with an internal locus of control attribute control of reinforcements to themselves, and those with an external locus of control attribute control to fate, chance, or powerful others. This construct is viewed as a generalized expectation

which functions across several situations (Biondo & MacDonald, 1971). How is self-esteem related to locus of control? Do low-self esteem students attribute their successes internally or externally?

The present study examined the relationship between academic achievement and self-esteem, as well as the relationship between academic achievement and the different dimensions of self-esteem. It also investigated the effect of levels of self-esteem on attributional style. Finally, this study suggested some intervention strategies that can help improve low self-esteem. The first chapter introduces the background of the study, indicates the problem of the study and presents its significance in addition to the research methodology used.

Statement of the Problem

Self-esteem is considered to be the evaluative element of an individual's self-concept (Crandall, 1973, as cited by Chiu, 1988). Brown, Dutton, and Cook (2001) described self-esteem as an individual's evaluation of his capacities, abilities, and characteristics. Self-esteem has been also defined as an expression of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with oneself, and a judgment or evaluation of the self (DuBois, Felner, Brand, Phillips, & Lease, 1996).

Research has examined the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. Self-esteem is crucial for students' well-being, and therefore high self-esteem has been associated with increased school performance, while low self-esteem has been associated with poor academic achievement (Pelish, 2006). Research shows a relationship between self-esteem and different kinds of situations and behavior, including academic situations and academic achievement behavior (Haynes, Hamilton-Lee, & Comer, 1988).

If there is a relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement as research consistently reveals, can a conclusion be made that students with high self-esteem are also high

achievers? Such a conclusion cannot be made absolutely because there are low self-esteem students who are high achievers, and there also are high self-esteem students who are low achievers. The big question is: since low self-esteem students with high academic achievement keep getting high grades, why doesn't their self-esteem improve? One explanation suggests that it might lie in the way such students attribute their successful experiences.

Attributional style refers to the way people explain the causes of success and failure in their lives (Peterson & Seligman, 1984, as cited by Cortes-Suarez & Sandiford, 2008). Some people think that the actions they do can influence the results they get; this kind of people show an internal attributional style. In contrast, some people think that they cannot influence events that happen to them, and therefore successful experiences, including academic success, come not through personal effort but by chance. Such people show an external attributional style (Galbraith & Alexander, 2005). Research suggests a relationship between a student's attributional style and academic achievement. Theorists state that an individual's attributional style, whether internal or external, influences his reactions to success and failure (Cortes-Suarez & Sandiford, 2008).

Heider's balance theory explains the conditions that influence the attribution of causality to internal (personal) or external (environmental) factors. This theory states that an individual's attributional style depends on his perception of his own ability. If an individual has a high evaluation of his personal ability, then he will attribute success internally, since success is consistent with his high self-view. However, he will attribute failure externally, since failure is not consistent with his high self-view. Likewise, if an individual has a low evaluation of his personal ability, he will attribute success to external factors and failure to internal sources in order to maintain the balance between his self-evaluation and evaluation of his own experiences.

In other words, “internals” have a positive view of themselves, while “externals” are characterized by a lack of confidence and personal efficacy (Gilmor & Minton, 1974).

The review of attribution research indicates that low self-esteem students with high academic achievement tend to have an external attributional style, and thus they tend to attribute their successes externally, which may explain why their self-esteem does not improve by getting many good grades.

Previous researchers presented self-esteem as a one-dimensional concept. But later research has suggested a two-dimensional model: competence and social dimensions (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995). A multidimensional model has also been suggested, including peers, school, family, body image, and sports dimensions (Dubois et al., 1996). Each of these dimensions is related to general self-esteem, but the peers dimension has the highest correlation with general self-esteem. Regarding academic achievement, the school average of students is related to the school dimension of self-esteem and not to general self-esteem.

Concerning peers or social self-esteem, literature has shown a high correlation between general self-esteem and the social dimension of self-esteem. Fletcher (2004) found that a positive correlation exists between intimate friendship and increased self-esteem (Pelish, 2006).

Numerous other researchers have obtained experimental results suggesting that the social dimension of self-esteem has the highest correlation with general self-esteem (Francis, 1997, Heatherton & Wyland, 2003, Leary, 2003, Srivastava, 1981).

Concerning school self-esteem, a research study on high and low academic achievers showed that students with high levels of academic achievement make a more positive self-evaluation in the academic domain. On the contrary, students with low levels of academic achievement make positive self-evaluations in areas not related to school. This means that high

achievers have high school self-esteem, i.e. they evaluate themselves highly in the school domain (Alves-Martins, Peixoto, Gouveia-Pereira, Amaral, & Pedro, 2002). A conclusion may be drawn that high GPA is not significantly associated with the many different dimensions of self-esteem; it is closely related only to the school dimensions. This may be another explanation of why the low self-esteem of high achieving students does not improve by getting many good grades.

Thus, low self-esteem students who are high achievers continue to have a low self-esteem because academic average is only positively related to the school dimension of self-esteem and not to general self-esteem, and because low self-esteem students tend to have an external attributional style, and so they tend to attribute their successes externally. The two explanations stated above explain why the self-esteem of low self-esteem students remains low despite their consistent success in the academic domain. In order to help these students in particular, and low self-esteem students in general, several intervention strategies may be considered. Since self-esteem is multidimensional as stated previously, intervention strategies to improve self-esteem are most helpful if they deal with life experiences in different settings and dimensions, because, as stated earlier, the specific dimensions of self-esteem are related to their corresponding areas of experiences in the different life domains of family, sports, school, social, and body image, and also to general self-esteem (DuBois et al., 1996).

The present study employed a multidimensional intervention model: participants were given three short stories in the life domains of family, peers, and school. The stories either depicted successful events or were regular stories. Right after reading the stories participants were asked to fill the State Self-Esteem scale. It was predicted that students who read the successful stories will have an increase in their state self-esteem more than students who read the regular stories.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the group of low self-esteem students who have high academic achievement as a function of general and specific self-esteem. Regarding general self-esteem, the rationale of this study is to find relationships between self-esteem and academic achievement, and self-esteem and attributional style. Regarding specific self-esteem, the present study utilized the multidimensional Self-Esteem Questionnaire in order to find the relationship of academic achievement to the different domains of self-esteem. This study also used short stories relating to different domains of self-esteem in order to examine their effect, as an intervention approach, to improve self-esteem.

Hypotheses

Based on a review of literature, and an understanding of the different theories and the conceptual ramifications of self-esteem, a set of predictions were made.

Since high self-esteem has consistently been associated with increased school performance, while low self-esteem with poor academic achievement (Pelish, 2006), the following hypothesis was tested:

H1: There will be a positive correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement.

Since individuals with high self-esteem tend to attribute responsibility for success to internal factors and failure to external factors, and those with low self-esteem tend to attribute responsibility for success to external/environmental variables and failure to internal/personal variables (Gilmor & Minton, 1974), the following prediction was made:

H2: There will be a negative correlation between self-esteem and attributional style.

Students with high levels of academic achievement tend to make a positive self-evaluation in the academic/school dimension more than students with low levels of academic achievement (Alves-Martins et al., 2002). The following prediction was tested:

H3: There will be a positive correlation between academic achievement and the school dimension of self-esteem.

The current study focuses on the particular group of students who keep getting high grades yet maintain a low self-esteem. In order to provide insight into this group of students, the variables locus of control and specific dimensions of self-esteem were selected in an attempt to explain why self-esteem remains low despite the high grades.

As an addition to the first part of relationships between the specified variables, an intervention part was suggested based on the concept that self-esteem is multidimensional. Interventions aimed at the specific dimensions of self-esteem will improve the global self-esteem much more than interventions aimed at a single dimension of self-esteem (DuBois et al., 1996). Therefore, participants were given three short stories in the life domains of family, peers, and school. Some participants were given stories depicting successful events, other were given stories portraying regular stories. Participants were asked to read the stories and imagine that they are the major characters in them. Right after reading the stories, participants' state self-esteem was measured. On these bases the following hypothesis was generated and tested:

H4: Upon reading successful stories in different life domains, state self-esteem will rise more than upon reading regular stories.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it sheds light on why the particular group of low self-esteem students who have high academic achievement maintain a low self-esteem. This study views the low self-esteem of these students in light of their external attributional style.

This study also investigates the relationships between academic achievement and the different dimensions of self-esteem, and attempts to illustrate that the dimension of self-esteem most highly related to academic achievement is the school dimension. Therefore, high grades tend to have an effect only on the school dimension, and not on general self-esteem.

In addition, this study contains implications to help this particular group of students: it suggests reattribution training to help these students attribute their successful experiences to internal/personal variables instead of external factors. It further suggests that provision of experiences of success in the different domains of life will effect an increase in different domains of self-esteem, which should lead to an improvement in general self-esteem.

Nature of the Study

The present research employed the quantitative method of statistical analysis. It relied on self-report measures where participants were asked to provide demographic information, their last semester's grade point average, and fill in the following questionnaires: the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Self-Esteem Questionnaire, and the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale. Participants also read 3 short stories and rated their state self-esteem afterwards. One hundred university students participated in the study. Analyses of the obtained data used correlations, regression, and t-tests of mean differences to test the hypotheses. Data were tabulated and analyzed and conclusions were drawn based on the obtained results.

Definition of Terms

Self-Esteem: an evaluative aspect of the self-system, which expresses satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the self (DuBois et al., 1996).

Academic Achievement: the school performance of students, assessed by their class average (Haynes et al., 2001).

Internal Attributional Style: attributing responsibility for success to internal factors, such as one's own ability (Gilmor & Minton, 1973).

External Attributional Style: attributing responsibility for success to external factors, such as luck (Gilmor & Minton, 1973).

State Self-Esteem: people's temporary feelings about themselves following a certain situation or event (Brown et al., 2001).

Delimitations

A delimitation of this study is that the students were given stories to read, which are imaginal and hypothetical when compared to actual opportunities to act in real life situations. Therefore it is uncertain whether this intervention strategy extends to reality or not. Another delimitation is that this study showed the effect of the stories on general state self-esteem and not on the different dimensions of self-esteem; this is because the current study is concerned on improving general self-esteem.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between academic achievement and self-esteem. Many studies have shown a relationship between self-esteem and attributional styles. Many studies have shown that self-esteem is not a one-dimensional concept, and researchers have suggested a multidimensional model over the years, including the dimensions of school, family, peers, sports, and body image. Following the notion that self-esteem has many dimensions, research has suggested that interventions aimed at the different dimensions are most effective in improving low self-esteem.

Self-Esteem

Definitions of Self-Esteem

During the past 20 years, self-esteem has been one of the most studied constructs in relation to individual differences in personality research (Baumeister, 1999, as cited by Ramsdal, 2008). But despite the great amount of attention and research given to this construct, there still doesn't exist a standard definition. However, there is a general consensus that self-esteem is the evaluative element of a person's self-concept. It may be defined as the respect, liking, and evaluation that one has for oneself, based on reality (Crandall, 1973, as cited by Chiu, 1988). Self-esteem refers to the way people evaluate their aptitudes, skills, and personality characteristics (Brown et al., 2001). Self-esteem expresses satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the self and is thus a key evaluative aspect of the self-system. From a theoretical perspective, self-esteem is the result of a procedure in which one evaluates and judges his self-concept, based on personal standards and values (DuBois et al., 1996).

Another definition of self-esteem sees it as “an expression of approval or disapproval, indicating the extent to which a person believes himself or herself competent, successful, significant, and worthy” (Coopersmith, 1981, p.298, as cited by Chiu, 1988). Self-esteem includes a person’s feelings, attitudes, perceptions, and inner emotions, which have all been shaped by environmental experiences, such as success reinforcements and failure punishments. According to Sprigle (1980), self-esteem may be seen as the internalization of the many expressions that one receives about oneself from others in his life, especially significant others such as parents, teachers, friends, and siblings (Haynes et al., 1988).

Trait and State Self-Esteem

In 2003, Trzesniewski, Donnellan, and Robins performed a meta-analysis which illustrated that self-esteem is a stable, trait-like construct. This means that people who have low self-esteem at a certain time tend to have low self-esteem years later, and people who have high self-esteem earlier in life tend to have high self-esteem later on. However, self-esteem is more stable in some stages of life compared to other stages. For example, during childhood and during old age, stability of self-esteem is low, but it increases throughout adolescence and early adulthood (Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005). Brown et al. (2001) defined self-esteem as the way people feel about themselves: this is called general or trait self-esteem because it is relatively stable and enduring across time and situations. The present study utilized a trait self-esteem scale to obtain scores of general self-esteem for the participants, in order to perceive how they view and evaluate themselves generally.

Alongside the construct of trait self-esteem, researchers have identified the construct of state self-esteem, which includes people’s momentary feelings about themselves (Park & Crocker, 2007). State self-esteem describes how one is feeling about oneself right now (Niiya,

Crocker, & Bartmess, 2007). Brown et al. (2001) defined state self-esteem as a temporary emotional status that arises from a certain event or situation. These events may improve self-esteem or threaten it. For example, people might feel better about themselves after succeeding in different situations, or they might feel bad about themselves after a non-satisfying experience. The main difference between state self-esteem and general self-esteem is that general self-esteem is more enduring, though it varies at some points in life.

As people go through life, self-esteem goes through variations, reflecting maturational and pubertal changes, as well as changes in the social environment. Since these changes are experienced by most people around the same age and in a similar way, it is possible to describe a normative trajectory of self-esteem across the lifespan: young children have relatively high self-esteem, which begins to decline at the end of childhood as children start basing their self-evaluations on external feedback from teachers, parents, and friends. During adolescence self-esteem continues to decline, and this is because of puberty and body image problems. Though adulthood, self-esteem gradually increases as people take up positions of power and status. Self-esteem peaks sometime around the late 60s. In old age, self-esteem declines due to the changes in roles, relationships, and physical functioning abilities (Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005).

The present study employed the notion of state self-esteem in order to measure the changes in the self-esteem of participants after being given short stories to read and to imagine the stories are happening to them.

Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement

Several studies have examined the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. Numerous research studies have indicated a significant relationship between positive self-esteem and academic self-efficacy. For example, a study on African American high

school students has shown a statistically significant relationship between general self-esteem and academic self-efficacy. Similarly, a study on school students from the seventh through the twelfth grades reported a positive correlation between positive self-esteem and academic self-perceptions (Ang, Neubronner, Oh, & Leong, 2006). Self-esteem is necessary for school children's health and well-being; high self-esteem is associated with increased school performance, better health, and productive behavior, while low self-esteem is associated with depression, unusual behavior, and poor academic achievement (Pelish, 2006).

Research shows a relationship between self-esteem and different kinds of behavior, including academic achievement behavior. For example, if a student is not performing well in school, the reason might not be only because the student lacks intelligence or ability: it might be that this student evaluates himself/herself as not being capable of performing well in academics. Although there is support for the view that self-esteem and achievement are highly correlated, some studies still view the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement to be complex and questionable (Haynes et al., 1988).

A study was conducted on high and low achieving grade seven students; these students' self-esteem, affect, and perceptions of social support were examined. Results indicated that the high achieving group's global self-worth was significantly higher than that of the low achieving group (Humphrey, Charlton, & Newton, 2004).

Haynes et al. (1988) performed a study on 148 high school students: they divided the students according to their classroom grades into high and low achievers. They found that those assessed as being below average in classroom performance, i.e. the low achievers, also tended to have lower levels of self-esteem. They also found that the difference of self-esteem between low achievers and high achievers was significant.

Based on the previously presented review of literature, the current study hypothesized that there will be a positive significant relationship between the two variables of self-esteem and academic achievement.

In the literature on the construct of self-esteem, there is strong support for the notion that self-esteem is correlated with academic achievement. Does this mean that all low achievers have low self-esteem? And can the conclusion be drawn that all high achievers have high self-esteem? If a correlation exists between self-esteem and academic achievement it is not complete, because there are many low self-esteem students with high averages, and high self-esteem students with low averages.

The big question is: since low self-esteem students with high academic achievement keep getting high grades, why doesn't their self-esteem improve? One explanation might be that general self-esteem is stable, as mentioned earlier. Srivastava (1981) has given another explanation, stating that the life experiences that have led to low self-esteem are so deeply rooted in people that the feelings of low-self esteem become a central personality trait, and so even successful academic achievements cannot influence and change these feelings.

In the sections that follow two more explanations will be given about why the low-self esteem of high achieving students does not improve. One of these explanations is based on the attributional style of these students, stating that individuals with low self-esteem have the tendency to attribute the successful events in their lives to external causes, and therefore they continue having low self-evaluations regardless of their successes. The other explanation is based on the school/academic dimension of self-esteem and its relation to academic average. The GPA of a student is positively and significantly related only to the school dimension of self-esteem, and therefore high grades affect only the school dimension and not the general self-

esteem. This might be why low self-esteem students who have constant success in the academic field continue having a low general self-esteem.

Attributional Style

Attributional style, or locus of control, is a cognitive personality variable that shows the way in which people explain the causes of success and failure in their lives (Peterson & Seligman, 1984, as cited by Cortes-Suarez & Sandiford, 2008). Understanding of this concept was developed by Julian B. Rotter in 1954.

Attribution research reveals an interaction between the type of outcome of events and causal dimensions (Jain & Mal, 1984). Some people believe that no amount of effort on their part will improve their performance or cause any change. According to these people, events occur beyond their control; success, particularly in the academic field, comes about by external factors, such as chance. Such people show an external attributional style, also referred to as an external locus of control. In contrast, there are people who assume that their actions can influence results; this kind of people look inward both for incentive and perseverance. Such people exhibit an internal attributional style, also referred to as an internal locus of control (Galbraith & Alexander, 2005).

One personality aspect which seems to play a key role in influencing causal attributions is internal-external control of reinforcement, which can be defined as a generalized expectation that reinforcement is causally related to one's own behavior. Individuals who believe that reinforcement is dependent upon their behavior exhibit the internal attributional style, while those who believe that reinforcement is independent of their actions and is controlled by fate, chance, or powerful others exhibit the external attributional style (Davis & Davis, 1972).

Gilmer & Minton (1974) also described the internal-external attributional style as a generalized expectancy related to an individual's belief concerning the locus of causality of different life events. The internals perceive the reinforcement they receive as a function of their own actions or characteristics, while the externals perceive the reinforcement they receive as a function of external forces such as fate, luck, or chance.

Concerning attribution theory and academic achievement, research suggests a relationship between a student's attributional style and achievement. Theorists and researchers argue that an individual's attributional style, whether internal or external, influences his reactions to success and failure (Cortes-Suarez & Sandiford, 2008).

The present study used the concept of attribution and locus of control in order to examine how the participants explain the causes of good or bad results in their life generally, and in academics specifically.

Attributional Style and Self-Esteem

Internal and External Attribution

Why doesn't the low-self esteem of high achieving students increase? Why does it remain low regardless of their high grades and successful academic experiences? One way to explain this phenomenon can be through attribution theory. As mentioned earlier, attributional style influences how one reacts to success and failure on achievement-related tasks (House, 2003; Kivulu & Rogers, 1998; McMillan & Forsyth, 1981, as cited by Cortes-Suarez & Sandiford, 2008).

In other words, the way a person attributes his success and failure experiences influence his reactions towards the events and also towards himself. What is the attributional style of an

individual with low self-esteem? In other words, how does an individual with low self-esteem attribute his successful experiences?

Gilmor & Minton (1974) stated that “internals”, i.e. individuals who have an internal attributional style, attribute responsibility for success internally to a greater extent than the “externals”, i.e. those who have an external attributional style. They explained their statement by Heider’s balance theory, which discusses the conditions that influence the attribution of causality to internal (personal) or external (environmental) factors. “A person’s judgment of causal attribution in an action outcome is very much dependent on his perception of his own power or ability” (Gilmor & Minton, 1974, p.161).

If an individual has a high evaluation of his personal ability, then he will tend to attribute success internally, or to the self, since success is consistent with his high and positive judgment of his ability. However, he will tend to attribute the responsibility for failure externally, since failure is inconsistent with his high assessment of his ability. Likewise, if an individual has a low evaluation of his personal ability, then, according to Heider’s balance model, success will be attributed to external factors and failure will be attributed to internal sources in order that the balance between his self-evaluation and evaluation of his own experiences is maintained (Gilmor & Minton, 1974).

Attribution Based on Self-Evaluation

The internal-external construct is based on an individual’s evaluation of his personal ability and efficacy. Individuals with a high and positive sense of personal ability, i.e. with high self-esteem, are called “internals” and tend to attribute responsibility for success internally and for failure externally. On the contrary, those with a sense of low personal ability, i.e. with low self-esteem, are called “externals” and tend to attribute responsibility for success externally and

for failure internally. Regarding failure, the opposite tendency occurs: "internals" tend to attribute responsibility for failure to external sources, while "externals" tend to attribute responsibility for failure to internal sources, i.e. their own abilities (Gilmor & Minton, 1974).

During the development of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, five psychologists classified a series of self-description statements into two groups, those signifying high self-esteem and those signifying low self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1959, as cited by Francis, 1997). Successive use of the instruments showed high self-esteem to be positively correlated with internal locus of control (Martin & Coley, 1984; Wallace, Cunningham, & Del Monte, 1984, as cited by Francis, 1997).

Midkiff and Griffin (1992) discussed a self-esteem maintenance theory of attributional processing. Self-esteem plays an important role in determining students' causal attributions in achievement situations. In an experiment where participants were asked to solve difficult anagrams, those with high self-esteem who had difficulty in solving the anagrams correctly made external attributions concerning their cause of bad performance, saying that the task was difficult. In contrast, those with low self-esteem attributed the cause of their bad performance to internal factors, such as their lack of effort or ability. Both high and low self-esteem participants attributed causality in a way that maintained their self-esteem.

The present study seeks to explain why low self-esteem students who get high grades continue having low self-esteem from the perspective of internal/external attributional style: individuals with low self-esteem have an external attributional style, which means that they attribute their successful experiences to external factors and not to themselves. This explanation provides insight into why consistent success in the academic field does not improve low self-esteem.

Dimensions of Self-Esteem

Self-Esteem as a Multidimensional Construct

Many researchers seem to agree that self-esteem is a unidimensional concept. But over the years, studies have suggested multidimensional models of self-esteem: some studies have presented two factors of self-esteem, while another study has suggested five distinct dimensions of self-esteem.

Tafarodi & Swann (1995) have suggested a two-dimensional model. A factor analysis of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which measures general self-esteem, shows two correlated but distinct factors which are the sense of social worth and the sense of personal efficacy. This means that general self-esteem may comprise two distinct dimensions of self-evaluative feelings, the dimensions of “worth” and “competence” (Ramsdal, 2008).

Simpson and Boyle (1975) claimed that general self-esteem measures are too general and cannot be used to predict specific behavior in different dimensions. More specific self-esteem measures predict specific behavior more successfully. Factor analytic studies of self-esteem have indicated two dimensions, the performance and the social (Stake, 1979).

Over the years researchers have tried to identify specific factors of self-esteem. Although the number of self-esteem factors and their type has varied, most researchers have talked about two factors: one linked with the achievement or competence dimension, and one linked with the communal or sociability dimension (Stake, 1985).

Dubois et al. (1996) have suggested five dimensions of self-esteem in their study on the development of the Self-Esteem Questionnaire. In research on the multidimensionality of self-esteem, relationships have been found between ratings of the dimensions of family, school, and peers and the more generalized views of the self. Other important dimensions of adolescents' and

youths' self-esteem include evaluations of the self concerning physical appearance and experiences in extracurricular activities such as sports. Therefore, the five dimensions are the peers, school, family, body image, sports, and global dimensions of self-esteem (Pope et al., 1988, as cited by Dubois et al., 1996).

The current study deals with the group of low self-esteem students with high academic achievement and examines the relation of academic achievement to different dimensions of self-esteem.

The School and Social Dimensions of Self-Esteem

A research study performed on 838 secondary school students sheds light on the relationship of academic achievement to the school dimension of self-esteem. Participants in this study were given a self-perception scale measuring specific areas of self-evaluation, such as school, social, athletic, physical appearance, and romantic dimensions. Then participants were divided into high academic achievers and low academic achievers. Results showed that students with high levels of academic achievement make a more positive self-evaluation in the academic dimension, compared to students with low levels of academic achievement who make more positive self-evaluations in areas not related to school (Alves-Martins et al., 2002).

Based on the previously described study, the present study clarifies the relation between academic achievement and the school dimension of self-esteem as a positive significant relationship, meaning that the higher the academic grades, the higher the school dimension of self-esteem.

Concerning social self-esteem, literature has shown a significant correlation between general self-esteem and the social dimension of self-esteem, which is higher than the correlation of general self-esteem to the other dimensions. A correlation exists between intimate friendship

and increased self-esteem (Fletcher, 2004, as cited by Pelish, 2006). Friendships help in increasing self-esteem: having people to talk to and trust can foster the feeling of belonging and acceptance, and this is what maintains a positive self-esteem (Leary et al., 1995, as cited by Pelish, 2006).

In Coopersmith's model of self-esteem, individuals having high self-esteem are also characterized as having higher levels of sociability (Francis, 1997). Leary (2003) explained that when someone deals successfully with life's challenges he is valued by other people, and this raises self-esteem. On the contrary, failing to meet life's challenges makes one feel he is not valued as a friend or a group member, and this lowers self-esteem. This happens because self-esteem has a relational value to it; it is related to how people think they are being observed and evaluated by others.

According to the Sociometer Theory, human beings have an evolutionary need to belong in a social group. And self-esteem functions as a monitor, or a "sociometer" of social acceptance or rejection. People with high self-esteem have sociometers that show a low probability of rejection, and those with low self-esteem have sociometers that show a high possibility of rejection. In this manner, self-esteem reflects the extent to which people feel belongingness (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003).

Low self-esteem students have a greater degree of alienation, or isolation, compared to high self-esteem students. Previous research has also identified low self-esteem students with greater degrees of passivity, rejection, withdrawal, and social estrangement (Srivastava, 1981).

The Self-Esteem Questionnaire was designed to evaluate dimensions of self-esteem that relate to each major developmental context of early adolescent development, such as the family, school, peer, sports, and body image. A study of this questionnaire on middle school and high

school students showed that different dimensions of self-esteem vary in the degree of contribution they make to general self-esteem: the peer and body image dimensions had the highest correlations with general self-esteem, compared to the family, school, and the athletics dimensions. This can be explained from a developmental point of view, since adolescence is a time where the peer group takes on added importance and bodily and pubertal changes occur (DuBois et al., 1996).

Although the present study did not hypothesize the relation of social self-esteem to general self-esteem, the review of literature presented above might assist in planning interventions to improve self-esteem, because by knowing that the social dimension is mostly related to general self-esteem interventions may be aimed at the social dimension.

Intervention Strategies

Multidimensional Model

In their studies of the multidimensionality of self-esteem and the development of the Self-Esteem Questionnaire, DuBois et al. (1996) presented the different dimensions of self-esteem such as peers, family, school, athletic, and body image. Results showed that these specific dimensions of self-esteem contribute to a more general sense of self-worth. The findings of their studies also indicated that the specific dimensions of self-esteem in adolescents and youth are related to their corresponding areas of contextual experiences in different life domains and settings. Therefore, intervention strategies are most beneficial if they address the experiences of adolescents and youth in several settings and dimensions. Interventions aimed at the specific areas of life experiences may produce a positive change in their corresponding specific dimensions of self-esteem. And since specific dimensions of self-esteem are strongly associated with general self-esteem, interventions aimed at the specific dimensions of self-esteem may

improve the general self-esteem much more than interventions aimed at a single dimension of self-esteem.

Interventions should be needs-based; while planning interventions it is important to check the scores of participants on the different dimensions of self-esteem and plan interventions in areas in which the participants are weak. For example, Wild, Flisher, Bhana, and Lombard (2004) gave 939 high school students the Self-Esteem Questionnaire, which measures the following five dimensions of self-esteem: peers, school, family, sports, and body image. Participants were also given a self-report questionnaire containing items about demographic characteristics and participation in risk behaviors, such as alcohol and tobacco use, bullying, suicidal attempts, and unprotected sexual behavior. Results showed that low self-esteem in the family and school contexts was significantly correlated with multiple risk behaviors in adolescents. Hence the suggestion was that interventions to protect adolescents from engaging in risk behaviors by increasing their self-esteem are likely to be most successful and helpful if they are aimed at the family and school domains.

Assertiveness and Reattribution Training

Assertiveness training is a helpful intervention strategy. Research has shown that assertiveness training decreases anxiety and fear and increases self-confidence, self-esteem, and interpersonal competence. A few authors (Alberti & Emmons, 1970; Bower & Bower, 1976; Lange & Jakubowski, 1976) have stated that training in assertiveness will bring about positive changes in attitudes towards the self; these changes include an increased self-esteem (Stewart & Lewis, 1986).

Sharma and Mavi (2001) examined word-task performance of 192 postgraduate Indian women. The women were divided into two groups: those with high self-esteem, and those with

low self-esteem. All participants were given 20 analogies to solve, and they were all led to believe that they failed. Later, participants were randomly assigned to two conditions: in one condition, they were led to believe that they failed because of an internal deficiency, such as lack of ability. In the other condition, they were led to believe that they failed because of an external cause, such as task difficulty. Later, all participants were given anagrams to solve. Results showed that the women with low self-esteem who attributed their failure to an external cause performed better on the anagrams than the women with low self-esteem who attributed their failure to an internal cause. In conclusion, externalizing the causes of failure assist individuals with low self-esteem to avoid developing negative self-views, to reduce their natural tendency towards self-blame, and to improve performance. Therefore, if low self-esteem individuals attribute their initial failure to external causes, and their successes to internal causes, their self-esteem and future performance will improve.

Based on the idea that specific dimensions of self-esteem are strongly associated with general self-esteem, previous studies have recommended intervention strategies that incorporate the different dimensions of self-esteem, and not just one dimension. The present study also suggests interventions aimed at different dimensions of self-esteem in order to improve the general self-esteem, and this is measured by having participants read three short stories in the life domains of family, peers, and school. These stories are either successful or regular stories. After reading the stories, participants' fill in the state self-esteem scale in order to detect the change in self-esteem caused by the short stories.

Hypotheses

In light of the literature reviewed above, the following hypotheses will be tested:

H1: There will be a positive correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement.

H2: There will be a negative correlation between self-esteem and attributional style.

H3: There will be a positive correlation between academic achievement and the school dimension of self-esteem.

H4: Upon reading successful stories in different life domains, state self-esteem will rise more than upon reading regular stories.

Setting

This study took place in the classrooms of Haigazian University. The approval of the professors was taken beforehand in order to administer the questionnaires during their class hours.

Participants

Participants were Haigazian University students. The sampling procedure used by the researcher was convenience sampling. The participants were restricted to those students who took the particular classes which the researcher entered. The total number of participants was 100. The age range was between 17 and 30 ($M = 21.27$). The gender distribution was 32 males and 68 females. The distribution of major of the 100 participants was diverse: participants were enrolled in the following majors: Business, Economics, Hospitality Management, Psychology, Education, Political Science, English, Computer Science, Management Information Systems, and Social Work.

Materials

A questionnaire booklet was used which included a demographic information sheet, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Self-Esteem Questionnaire, and the Newicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale. The last page comprised three short stories followed by the State Self-Esteem

CHAPTER 3

Method

This study was performed by having participants provide demographic information and fill in four questionnaires. Participants were Haigazian university undergraduate students. The questionnaires were distributed, collected and scored by the researcher. Data were collected and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

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Materials

A questionnaire booklet was used which included a demographic information sheet, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Self-Esteem Questionnaire, and the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale. The last page comprised three short stories followed by the State Self-Esteem

Scale. On the demographic information sheet participants were asked to indicate their age, gender, university major, number of semesters completed, and last semester's average.

There were two different types of short stories: half of the participants read three stories of success in different domains of life, while the other half read three regular stories in different domains of life. The three domains of life selected for the stories were: social, family, and academic.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) (Rosenberg, 1965) was used to assess students' self-reported general self-esteem. This scale consists of 10 items about the self such as "On the whole I am satisfied with myself"; five items are positively worded and five are negatively worded. Students rate each description on a 4-point scale ranging from SD (Strongly Disagree) to SA (Strongly Agree). Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem (Neubronner, Oh & Leong, 2006).

Psychometric Properties

Neubronner et al. (2006) found the Cronbach alpha for RSE in their sample to be .71.

In the study done by Chiu (1988), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale had an internal consistency index of .93.

Silber and Tippet (1965) obtained a two week test-retest reliability of .85, and Crandall (1973) found a convergent validity of .60 with the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Chiu, 1988).

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale has been and is still the most widely used self-report questionnaire in research studies related to self-esteem (Marsh, 1996, as cited by Ang et al., 2006). This scale provides a unidimensional index of general self-esteem (Chiu, 1988).

Self-Esteem Questionnaire

The Multidimensional Self-Esteem Questionnaire (SEQ) was developed by DuBois et al. (1996). Participants rate items on a 4-point scale ranging from SD (Strongly Disagree) to SA (Strongly Agree). Each item is given a numeric value from 1 to 4, higher number indicating higher self-esteem. The negatively worded items: these items are reverse scored. The SEQ measures the subscales of peers, school, family, sports, and body image self-esteem. The “peers” subscale assesses self-evaluations in the social dimension (e.g. “I feel good about how much my friends like my ideas”). The “school” subscale assesses self-evaluations in the academic dimension (e.g. “I am as good a student as I would like to be”). The “family” subscale assesses self-evaluations in the family context (e.g. “I am happy about how much my family likes me”). The “sports” subscale assesses self-evaluations in the athletic domain (e.g. “I am as good at sports as I want to be”). The “body image” subscale assesses self-evaluations of body image (e.g. “I like my body just the way it is”) (Wild et al., 2004).

Psychometric Properties

Dubois et al. (1996) found internal consistencies for each subscale of the SEQ ranging from .81 to .91, and test-retest reliability ranging from .74 to .84 in two studies done on American adolescents.

In 2002, Wild, Flisher, Bhana and Lombard investigated the internal consistency of the SEQ and found Cronbach alphas ranging from .75 to .92. They also found a test-retest reliability ranging from .73 to .83 in two studies done on English-speaking south Africans (Wild et al., 2004).

The Self-Esteem Questionnaire is a multidimensional measure of self-esteem, and it has been used to measure self-esteem in the different domains of life, such as peers, school, family, body image, and sports self-esteem (Wild et al., 2004).

Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale

The Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale (NSLC) (Nowicki & Strickland, 1973) is a measure of internal versus external control of reinforcement, i.e. the degree to which people believe that reinforcement is a result of their own actions or of chance. It was developed by Nowicki and Strickland in 1973. It has 40 statements to which the participant can answer “Yes” or “No”. Scores range from 0 to 40, with high scores indicating an external orientation and low scores indicating an internal orientation (Miller, Fitch & Marshall, 2003).

Psychometric Properties

Test-retest reliability was found to be .75 for a group of adolescents on a six-week interval (Miller et al., 2003).

The following reliability measures were found in the study done by Echohawk and Parsons (1977): internal consistency reliabilities ranging from .67 to .79, and test-retest reliabilities ranging from .67 to .81 over a period of six weeks.

The Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale is used in studies that want to measure locus of control. It has been adopted from the Rotter scale, which yields a measure of generalized expectancy for internal versus external control of reinforcement. The NSLC covers a wide range of situations and interpersonal interactions (Echohawk & Parsons, 1977).

State Self-Esteem Scale

The State Self-Esteem Scale is an adapted version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. It measures people’s temporary feelings about themselves. The statements are as such: “Right

now, I feel satisfied with myself”; “Right now, I feel useless.” The scale comprises 10 items (Park & Crocker, 2008). Students rate each description on a 4-point scale ranging from SD (Strongly Disagree) to SA (Strongly Agree). Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem.

Psychometric Properties

In the study done by Crocker and Bartmess (2004), the Cronbach alpha of the State Self-Esteem Scale was .88, while in the study by Park and Crocker (2008), the Cronbach alpha of the State Self-Esteem Scale was .91.

The State Self-Esteem Scale is used in studies that wish to measure people’s momentary feelings about themselves, especially after a particular incident or situation (Park & Crocker, 2008).

Procedure

The researcher administered the booklets to the participants during their class hours. The researcher explained to the students that this study is about individual differences, i.e. about how people differ on various constructs and then asked the students to fill in the booklets. Some students asked what the study is about, some asked why the stories were included, and some asked what the purpose of the researcher is. For those who asked, the researcher explained in detail the purpose of the study. In general, the students were cooperative and expressed good will to the researcher. In total, 100 booklets were handed out. The time taken to fill in a booklet ranged from 11 minutes to 25 minutes. After the participants had completed the booklets, the researcher scored them and fed the data into the computer.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This study made use of four scales: the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Self-Esteem Questionnaire, the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale, and the State Self-Esteem Scale. The internal reliability of the scales was determined by calculating Cronbach's alpha for each scale. Results showed that each of the four scales has high internal reliability. Similar coefficients for Cronbach's alpha have been computed in previous studies (see Table 1).

Table 1

Cronbach's alpha for the scales

Scale	Previous Cronbach's alpha	Current Cronbach's alpha
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	.71 - .93	.83
Self-Esteem Questionnaire	.75 - .92	.86
Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale	.67 - .79	.74
State Self-Esteem Scale	.88 - .91	.86

To test the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement a Pearson correlation coefficient was computed between the participants' scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and their self-reported average of the previous semester in the university. The result of the correlation $r(100) = -.049, p < .630$ showed no relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. Evidently the predicted relation between self-esteem and academic achievement was not supported.

To test the relationship between self-esteem and attributional style a Pearson correlation coefficient was computed between the participants' scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

and their scores on the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale. The result $r(100) = -.395$, $p < .000$ showed specifically a negative significant relationship between the two variables. This is in line with the hypothesized relationship between self-esteem and attributional style.

Participants with high scores on the self-esteem scale tend to have low scores on the locus of control scale. In other words, high self-esteem scorers tend to have an internal attributional style, while low self-esteem scorers tend to have an external attributional style.

In addition to the correlation analysis, an independent-samples t-test was conducted on attributional style and self-esteem. Participants were coded into groups: group "1" are those who scored between 0-8 on the locus of control questionnaire, i.e. those with an internal attributional style, and group "2" are those who scored above 12 on the locus of control questionnaire, i.e. those with an external attributional style. Results showed that those in group "1", the internals, had higher means of self-esteem scores than those in group "2", the externals (see Table 2).

Table 2

Group Statistics and t-test

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Rosenberg	1	29	23.72	4.250	3.772	.000
	2	54	19.91	4.469		

To test the relationship between the school dimension of self-esteem and academic achievement, a Pearson correlation coefficient was computed between the participants' scores on the school dimension of the Self-Esteem Questionnaire and their self-reported GPA of the previous semester in the university. A correlation of $r(100) = .413$, $p < .000$ was obtained, showing a positive significant relationship between the two variables. This relationship means

that participants with high academic averages tend to have high scores on the school dimension of self-esteem.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted on the Rosenberg self-esteem scores in order to see the difference between the experimental and control groups on general self-esteem before reading the stories. Results showed no significant difference in general self-esteem scores before reading the stories for the experimental group ($M = 21.42$) and the control group ($M = 21.56$) (see Table 3).

Table 3

Group Statistics and t-test

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Rosenberg	experimental	50	21.42	4.98197	-.155	.877
	Control	50	21.56	4.00591		

To test the difference in state self-esteem between the experimental and control groups after reading the stories, an independent-samples t-test was conducted on state self-esteem. Results showed a significant difference in scores for the experimental group ($M = 24.08$) and the control group ($M = 21.80$). This means that the mean score of state self-esteem after reading the stories is higher for the participants who were in the experimental condition (see Table 4).

Table 4

Group Statistics and t-test

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
State self-esteem	experimental	50	24.08	5.04607	2.569	.012
	control	50	21.80	3.73073		

Further analysis of the results displayed some important points. To measure the contribution of each of the five dimensions of self-esteem in the Self-Esteem Questionnaire on the scores of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, general self-esteem was regressed on the peers, school, family, body image, and sports dimensions of self-esteem. Results showed that the “peers” dimension is most highly and significantly related to general self-esteem, meaning that the peers/social dimension of self-esteem is the greatest predictor of general self-esteem, followed by the body image dimension, followed by the school dimension. The contribution of the athletic and the family dimensions on general self-esteem were not significant. This can be observed in the table of regression based on the Beta: the coefficient of Beta for the “peers” is the highest; it is even double that of the “school” coefficient (see Table 5).

Table 5

Regression analysis of general self-esteem on the five dimensions of self-esteem

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-2.396	3.510		-.683	.496
	peers	.447	.109	.387	4.086	.000
	school	.211	.096	.190	2.200	.030
	family	.076	.101	.065	.752	.454
	body	.372	.154	.210	2.418	.018
	sports	.123	.098	.112	1.254	.213

a. Dependent Variable: Rosenberg

R Square= .391 and adjusted R Square=.358

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The present study focused on the group of low self-esteem students with high academic achievement, and sought to examine their attributional style and their self-evaluations on different domains of self-esteem. Several noteworthy results can be pointed out from this study.

Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement

The current study hypothesized a positive relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. Obtained correlational results however showed no relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. In schools and in universities, there are high self-esteem students with high academic achievement and low self-esteem students with low academic achievement; but there also are high self-esteem students with low academic achievement, and low self-esteem students with high academic achievement. The existence of the last two groups may account for the obtained result of no relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement.

Another explanation for the obtained result may be the fact that students reported their total GPA, and not their grades in the different courses they are taking. Perhaps if general self-esteem was correlated with specific subject areas, there would be a relationship between academic average and self-esteem, since a student might have a high grade in one subject and a low grade in another subject, but GPA is the average of all the courses.

The literature is full of discussions associating self-esteem and academic achievement. Ang et al. (2006) pointed to a significant relationship between positive self-esteem and academic self-efficacy. Pelish (2006) associated high self-esteem with increased school performance and low self-esteem with poor academic achievement. However, Haynes et al. (1988) stated that even though literature provides support for the view that self-esteem and achievement are correlated,

the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement is complex and questionable and there has been no clear conclusion concerning their relationship. Also, a research study stated that self-concept of ability may affect grades, but grades have little influence on subsequent self-concept (Shavelson & Bolus, 1982, as cited by Midkiff & Burke, 1991). The claims of Haynes et al. (1988) and Midkiff and Burke (1991), as well as the existence of a group of low self-esteem students with high GPA, and a group of high self-esteem students with low GPA may justify the obtained result of no relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement.

The present study was interested in the group of students who are high achievers but display low levels of self-esteem and sought to find explanations as to why their self-esteem remains low regardless of their consistent success in the academic field.

Self-Esteem and Attributional Style

The result of the correlation between self-esteem and attributional style yielded a negative correlation between the two variables. Consequently, participants with high self-esteem had lower scores on the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale, and thus an internal attributional style, and participants with low self-esteem had higher scores on the Locus of Control Scale, and thus an external attributional style. This result suggests that low self-esteem participants tend to have an external attributional style, meaning that they tend to attribute their successes to external factors and their failures to internal factors.

This result is in line with Gilmor and Minton's (1974) explanation of Heider's balance theory; this theory states that an individual's attributional style depends on how he perceives himself and evaluates his own abilities. For example, if an individual has a high evaluation of his personal ability, then he is considered to have an "internal" attributional style, meaning that he attributes success internally since success is consistent with his high self-view, and he attributes

failure externally since failure is not consistent with his high self-view. In the same sense, if an individual has a low perception of his personal ability, then he is considered to have an “external” attributional style, meaning that he attributes success to external factors because success is inconsistent with his low self-evaluation, and he attributes failure to internal factors because failure is consistent with his low self-evaluation.

The external attribution of successful events in general, and academic events in particular, answers the question of why some students continue to have a low self-esteem in spite of their high academic achievement.

Academic Achievement and the School Dimension of Self-Esteem

One hypothesis of this study was that the school dimension will have a positive relationship with academic achievement. The correlation analysis between academic average and the school dimension of the Self-Esteem Questionnaire revealed a positive relationship between the two variables.

This finding sheds light on the question of why some students have a low self-esteem in spite of their high academic achievement: the academic average relates to the “school” dimension of self-esteem and not to general self-esteem. Therefore, getting high grades affects the school self-esteem and not the general self-esteem.

This prediction is supported by the study done by Alves-Martins et al. (2002), whose results showed that students with high levels of academic achievement make a more positive self-evaluation in the academic dimension compared to other dimensions, while students with low levels of academic achievement make more positive self-evaluations in areas not related to school.

Interventions in Different Dimension of Self-Esteem

Based on the multidimensional model of self-esteem, the present study hypothesized that interventions aimed at many different dimensions of self-esteem will be most helpful in improving self-esteem. In order to demonstrate this idea, the booklets that the participants filled included a page of three short stories, which presented successful events in the family, social, and academic dimensions, followed by a scale measuring state self-esteem.

The comparison between the experimental and control groups on state self-esteem after reading the stories revealed that those who read stories presenting successful events showed an increase in state self-esteem more than those who read the neutral stories. In other words, as the participants experienced success in different life dimensions through reading the successful stories, their state self-esteem increased. Although this intervention strategy was imaginal and displayed on paper only, the effect might be used to generalize it to real life circumstances; one might conclude here that chances of success in different dimensions of life, not only the school dimension, may lead to an improvement of low self-esteem.

The idea of interventions in multiple domains was referred to by DuBois et al. (1996). In their studies on the multidimensionality of self-esteem, they discussed in detail the development of the Self-Esteem Questionnaire with its different dimensions of self-esteem such as peers, family, school, athletic, body image, and global dimensions. Their studies revealed that these specific dimensions of self-esteem contribute to a more global sense of self-worth, and that each of these dimensions is related to their corresponding areas of contextual experiences in different life domains. Thus it is necessary to plan intervention strategies that address the experiences of adolescents and youth in many different dimensions; this will be much more helpful than interventions aimed at a single dimension of self-esteem.

The Peer Dimension of Self-Esteem

To measure the contribution of each of the five domains of self-esteem on general self-esteem, the peer, school, family, body image, and sports dimensions of self-esteem from the Self-Esteem Questionnaire were regressed on general self-esteem. The result showed peer self-esteem to most strongly predict general self-esteem. In other words, those with high self-esteem among their peers tend to generally have a high self-esteem altogether.

This finding is in line with literature: one study showed that a correlation exists between intimate friendship and increased self-esteem (Fletcher, 2004, as cited by Pelish, 2006). Another study illustrated that friendships help in increasing self-esteem: having people to talk to and trust can foster the feeling of belonging and acceptance, and this is what maintains a positive self-esteem (Leary et al., 1995, as cited by Pelish, 2006). In Coopersmith's model of self-esteem, high self-esteem and higher levels of sociability are significantly correlated (Francis, 1997). All these studies demonstrate that the social dimension of self-esteem has a strong relationship with general self-esteem.

Conclusion

The results of this study showed that self-esteem and academic achievement are not related; self-esteem correlates negatively with attributional style; the school dimension of self-esteem is most highly related to academic achievement; and experiencing success in the different dimensions of life helps improve low self-esteem.

While previous research has presented self-esteem as a one-dimensional concept, recent research has suggested a multidimensional model. Based on the multidimensionality of self-esteem, it is best to address intervention strategies at the several different dimensions of life, because the specific dimensions of self-esteem are related to their corresponding areas of

experiences. Therefore, the current study suggested that low self-esteem students be given chances of success in the different dimensions of life in order to improve their self-esteem.

There were some delimitations to this study. First, the participants were given stories to read, and not real-life opportunities to experience. Another delimitation was that after reading the stories participants filled in the State Self-Esteem Scale, and this showed an increase in general self-esteem but it did not show which dimension of self-esteem increased most, or which dimensions did not change at all.

The major findings of this study bear two very important suggestions for school and university counselors in dealing with students who have low self-esteem, especially those who are good academically but continue to have a low evaluation of themselves. One suggestion is "retribution training", in which low self-esteem students are guided to change their self-defeating attributional style in relation to their success and failure experiences, such as internalizing the causes of previous and current successes. This would help them feel more positive about themselves and their abilities. The second suggestion is providing the students with opportunities of success in different life dimensions, especially in the peers dimension since it is mostly correlated with general self-esteem. Succeeding in different life dimensions, with attributing success internally will help low self-esteem students to feel better and more confident.

For future studies, it would be valuable to have low self-esteem students actually role-play experiences of success instead of only reading them in short stories, and then fill the State Self-Esteem Scale. A better suggestion is to have students role-play experiences of success and fill a questionnaire which measures the different dimensions of self-esteem, in order to see which dimensions of self-esteem these experiences of success influenced the most.

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APPENDIX A

Demographic Information

Please provide the following information about yourself:

Age: _____ (D) Strongly Disagree, (D) Disagree, (A) Agree, (SA) Strongly Agree

Gender: _____ SD D A SA

University Major: _____ SD D A SA

Number of semesters completed: _____ SD D A SA

Last semester's average: _____ SD D A SA

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of _____ SD D A SA

6. I certainly feel useless at times _____ SD D A SA

7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least equal to others _____ SD D A SA

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself _____ SD D A SA

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure _____ SD D A SA

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself _____ SD D A SA

APPENDIX B

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Please read each statement and circle SD, D, A, or SA which indicates how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

(SD) Strongly Disagree; (D) Disagree; (A) Agree; (SA) Strongly Agree

1. On the whole I am satisfied with myself	SD	D	A	SA
2. At times I think that I am no good at all	SD	D	A	SA
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities	SD	D	A	SA
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people	SD	D	A	SA
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of	SD	D	A	SA
6. I certainly feel useless at times	SD	D	A	SA
7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least equal to others	SD	D	A	SA
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself	SD	D	A	SA
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure	SD	D	A	SA
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself	SD	D	A	SA

APPENDIX C

Self-Esteem Questionnaire (SEQ)

Instructions: These questions ask how you feel about yourself. For each question, choose the *one* answer that best describes how YOU feel about yourself. There are no right or wrong answers.

(SD) Strongly Disagree; (D) Disagree; (A) Agree; (SA) Strongly Agree

1. I am as popular with others my own age as I want to be	SD	D	A	SA
2. I am as good a student as I would like to be	SD	D	A	SA
3. I am happy about how much my family likes me	SD	D	A	SA
4. I am happy with the way I look	SD	D	A	SA
5. I am as good at sports/physical activities as I want to be	SD	D	A	SA
6. I am as good as I want to be at making new friends	SD	D	A	SA
7. I am doing as well on school work as I would like to	SD	D	A	SA
8. I am too much trouble to my family	SD	D	A	SA
9. I like my body just the way it is	SD	D	A	SA
10. I wish I was better at sports/physical activities	SD	D	A	SA
11. I have as many close friends as I would like to have	SD	D	A	SA
12. I am good enough at math	SD	D	A	SA
13. I get in trouble too much at home	SD	D	A	SA
14. I feel good about my height and weight	SD	D	A	SA
15. I feel OK about how well I do when I participate in sports/physical activities	SD	D	A	SA
16. I am as well liked by others as I want to be	SD	D	A	SA
17. I am as good at reading and writing as I want to be	SD	D	A	SA
18. I feel OK about how important I am to my family	SD	D	A	SA
19. I wish I looked a lot different	SD	D	A	SA
20. I am happy about how many different kinds of sports/physical activities I am good at	SD	D	A	SA
21. I feel good about how well I get along with others	SD	D	A	SA
22. I get grades that are good enough for me	SD	D	A	SA
23. I get along as well as I would like to with my family	SD	D	A	SA
24. I wish it were easier for me to learn new kinds of sports/physical activities	SD	D	A	SA
25. I wish my friends liked me more than they do	SD	D	A	SA
26. I feel OK about how good of a student I am	SD	D	A	SA
27. My family pays enough attention to me	SD	D	A	SA
28. I participate in as many different kinds of sports/physical activities as I want to	SD	D	A	SA
29. I feel good about how much my friends like my ideas	SD	D	A	SA
30. I do as well on tests in school as I want to	SD	D	A	SA
31. I am happy with how much my family loves me	SD	D	A	SA
32. I feel OK about how much others like doing things with me	SD	D	A	SA
33. I get too many bad grades on my report cards	SD	D	A	SA
34. I feel good about how much my family cares about my ideas	SD	D	A	SA

APPENDIX D

Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale

1. Do you believe that most problems will solve themselves if you just don't fool with them?
a. Yes b. No
2. Do you believe that you can stop yourself from catching a cold?
a. Yes b. No
3. Are some people just born lucky?
a. Yes b. No
4. Most of the time do you feel that getting good grades meant a great deal to you?
a. Yes b. No
5. Are you often blamed for things that just aren't your fault?
a. Yes b. No
6. Do you believe that if somebody studies hard enough he or she can pass any subject?
a. Yes b. No
7. Do you feel that most of the time it doesn't pay to try hard because things never turn out right anyway?
a. Yes b. No
8. Do you feel that if things start out well in the morning it's going to be a good day no matter what you do?
a. Yes b. No
9. Do you feel that most of the time parents listen to what their children have to say?
a. Yes b. No
10. Do you believe that wishing can make good things happen?
a. Yes b. No
11. When you get punished does it usually seem it's for no good reason at all?
a. Yes b. No
12. Most of the time do you find it hard to change a friend's opinion?
a. Yes b. No
13. Do you think that cheering more than luck helps a team to win?
a. Yes b. No
14. Did you feel that it was nearly impossible to change your parents' minds about anything?
a. Yes b. No

15. Do you believe that parents should allow children to make most of their own decisions?
a. Yes b. No
16. Do you feel that when you do something wrong there's very little you can do to make it right?
a. Yes b. No
17. Do you believe that most people are just born good at sports?
a. Yes b. No
18. Are most of the other people your age stronger than you are?
a. Yes b. No
19. Do you feel that one of the best ways to handle most problems is just not to think about them?
a. Yes b. No
20. Do you feel that you have a lot of choice in deciding who your friends are?
a. Yes b. No
21. If you find a four-leaf clover, do you believe that it might bring you good luck?
a. Yes b. No
22. Did you often feel that whether or not you did your homework had much to do with what kind of grades you got?
a. Yes b. No
23. Do you feel that when a person your age is angry at you, there's little you can do to stop him or her?
a. Yes b. No
24. Have you ever had a good-luck charm?
a. Yes b. No
25. Do you believe that whether or not people like you depends on how you act?
a. Yes b. No
26. Did your parents usually help you if you asked them to?
a. Yes b. No
27. Have you felt that when people were angry with you it was usually for no reason at all?
a. Yes b. No
28. Most of the time, do you feel that you can change what might happen tomorrow by what you do today?
a. Yes b. No

29. Do you believe that when bad things are going to happen they just are going to happen no matter what you try to do to stop them?
a. Yes b. No
30. Do you think that people can get their own way if they just keep trying?
a. Yes b. No
31. Most of the time do you find it useless to try to get your own way at home?
a. Yes b. No
32. Do you feel that when good things happen they happen because of hard work?
a. Yes b. No
33. Do you feel that when somebody your age wants to be your enemy there's little you can do to change matters?
a. Yes b. No
34. Do you feel that it's easy to get friends to do what you want them to do?
a. Yes b. No
35. Do you usually feel that you have little to say about what you get to eat at home?
a. Yes b. No
36. Do you feel that when someone doesn't like you there's little you can do about it?
a. Yes b. No
37. Did you usually feel that it was almost useless to try in school because most other children were just plain smarter than you were?
a. Yes b. No
38. Are you the kind of person who believes that planning ahead makes things turn out better?
a. Yes b. No
39. Most of the time, do you feel that you have little to say about what your family decides to do?
a. Yes b. No
40. Do you think it's better to be smart than to be lucky?
a. Yes b. No

APPENDIX E

Short Stories (Experimental Condition)

Below you will read different events. As you read, please imagine that each of these events is really happening to you.

- 1) One of your friends invites you to a party at his house. When you go to the party, you realize that there is no one you know, and since your friend is busy with all his guests, you sit alone. Some guys who know each other start making jokes and laughing. Then and there you decide to tell a joke, to which those sitting near you laugh. Then they ask for another joke. You tell many jokes and make everyone laugh. People start gathering around you and talking with you. One of them tells you that you are friendly, and two others claim that you are so much fun to be around.
- 2) Your mother needs to undergo a small operation, which requires her to stay in the hospital for two days, and then rest at home for a week. Being the oldest child, the pressure to take care of the house and your younger brother and sister is all on you. It is a difficult and stressful week for you as you try to balance between your studies and all the housework. After a few days your mother calls you to her room and says she is very proud of you; she states that you truly succeeded in taking care of the house and the family, and that you have become a mature and responsible person.
- 3) After the professor finishes explaining the chapter, she says that she will choose one student to repeat the explanation, and she starts looking at your direction. Of course, you start looking in another direction, but she calls your name. Your heart starts beating and you think this is not fair because you have not been given time to study the material. Nevertheless, you put a fake smile on your face, stand up, go in front of the class and do your best in explaining the chapter. When you finish everyone applauds and the professor says she is amazed at how good you are at listening and understanding new material. Later your classmates tell you that they think you are excellent in public speaking.

APPENDIX F

Short Stories (Control Condition)

Below you will read different events. As you read, please imagine that each of these events is really happening to you.

- 1) Next week it is the birthday of one of your friends. She is inviting some friends over for dinner because it is her birthday. Since you are invited, you go to a gift shop to buy a gift for her. You buy the gift, write a small card and put it on the gift, and when the day comes you go to the birthday of your friend.

- 2) Your family consists of four members: your father, your mother, you and your brother. During vacations, you have the tradition of visiting your cousins. On Monday, the university announces that Wednesday is a day off. Since you have a day off, your family decides to visit your uncle. So you all get in the car, go to your uncle's house and visit him and his family.

- 3) You are registered for an English course in the university. Your schedule is MWF at 3:15. The semester starts in 2 days. So you go and buy the textbook, the novel, and a copybook for your notes. On Monday it is your first session. You start the course; and so every Monday, Wednesday and Friday you attend the English class.

APPENDIX G

State Self-Esteem Scale

Please circle (SD) Strongly Disagree; (D) Disagree; (A) Agree; (SA) Strongly Agree, according to how you feel RIGHT NOW

1. Right now, I am satisfied with myself	SD	D	A	SA
2. Right now I think that I am no good at all	SD	D	A	SA
3. Right now I feel that I have many good qualities	SD	D	A	SA
4. Right now, I feel I am able to do things as well as most others	SD	D	A	SA
5. Right now, I feel I do not have much to be proud of	SD	D	A	SA
6. I certainly feel useless right now	SD	D	A	SA
7. I feel that I am a person of worth right now	SD	D	A	SA
8. Right now, I wish I had more respect for myself	SD	D	A	SA
9. Right now, I feel that I am a failure	SD	D	A	SA
10. I have a positive attitude toward myself right now	SD	D	A	SA