STUDY REGARDING SELF-EFFICACY, SELF-ESTEEM AND LEARNING SUCCESS IN A GROUP OF STUDENTS

Alina MĂRGHITAN, Codruța Gavrilă, Cristina TULBURE

BUASVM of Timişoara, Romania

alinamarg@yahoo.com, *gavrila_codruta@yahoo.com*, *tulburecristina@gmail.com*

Abstract : The analysis of factors that influence learning and lead to scholastic and professional success is the subject of many researches meant to improve the instructive-educational process. Within the group of students we made a research regarding the existent relationships between perceived self-efficacy, self-esteem and school results materialized through the obtained average for faculty admission. Self-efficacy refers to the beliefs students have with reference to their capacities of mobilizing their cognitive, motivational and behavioural resources to successfully accomplish their learning task. Expectations in relation to their own efficacy in learning influence their thoughts, emotions and behaviours within this task and the associated performance. If self-efficacy is correlated to self-perceived abilities to reach a certain goal, self-esteem is rather related to the global perception of its own value. The purpose of the study is to establish the level of self-efficacy for learning, of perceived self-esteem, and to compare them with the school grades obtained by the first year students. The present research included a group of 90 students from the faculties of Agriculture, Horticulture, Farm Management and Food Processing. Data analysis pointed out the important relation between their own abilities and proficiencies perception and the results of their actions. The research can be useful for all theorists and practitioners interested in elevating learning performances simultaneously with the development of their personalities.

Key words: self-efficacy, self-esteem, learning success, higher education

INTRODUCTION

Optimising individuals' adjustment to society in the 21st century is possible due to information from such fields as personology, psychotherapy, and social psychology that emphasise the influence of psychic traits involved in the process. One of the psychological concepts involved is self-efficacy. According to BANDURA (1986), self-efficacy refers to the convictions of an individual regarding his/her ability of activating cognitive, behavioural and motivational resources to successfully achieve a certain task, i.e. an individual's ability of organising and conducting an action that ensures the reaching of that goal (BANDURA, 1986; PINTRICH & SCHUNK, 1996). Self-efficacy influences the life of a person and the way somebody perceives his/her ability of managing one's own potential to overcome the difficulties in the reaching of goals. In other words, people's convictions about their efficacy affect significantly their choices. Perceived self-efficacy influences the level of motivation and perseverance. Success often needs a constant effort: low self-efficacy thus becomes a self-limiting factor. To succeed, people need a feeling of self-efficacy besides resistance to life obstacles.

People with high self-efficacy set high goals and they have a higher resistance to difficulties. In case of failure, they recover easier and explain the failure as rather the effect of a lack of knowledge or skills than of a lack of personal abilities. In exchange, in people with low self-efficacy, the focus is on personal deficiencies: the obstacles are more difficult to overcome and the failure rate increases. Hence the tendency to make fewer efforts, to set smaller goals: the result, less successful experiences. People with low self-efficacy recover with greater difficulty in case of failure and have a higher stress level and higher depression

rates. Self-efficacy affects the way people think, the choices they make, the goals they set, the level of effort, the way in which they anticipate results and the level of resistance to adversity, the quality of emotional life and the level of stress and depression.

According to BANDura, self-efficacy does not have a general character: it refers to specific domains. There are global self-efficacy (the trust in being successful or not in most situations) and specific self-efficacy (specific to particular situations). Self-efficacy can also act as a motivational factor guiding the person towards his/her goals and towards delimiting interests. Bandura claims there are four sources of self-efficacy:

-Success, one of the most important and palpable sources: successful experiences increase the feeling of self-efficacy. Naturally, an increased number of successful experiences lead to a higher level of self-efficacy, and experiencing failure quite often can lead to lower levels of self-efficacy. It is important to be able to adjust the level of students' aspirations according to their potential since this relationship increases learning success and self-efficacy levels (RADU, 1991).

-Social modelling: the social models students identify with affect their self-efficacy. If we identify with somebody, we perceive ourselves as having the same high or low abilities.

-Social persuasion affects self-efficacy through the attitude of the social members regarding somebody else's ability to reach targets. These appreciations can increase or decrease self-efficacy.

-Emotional states affect the way somebody perceives his/her own efficacy. A mainly positive emotional person perceives both success and failure depending his/her own way of being.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study goal was to establish the level of learning self-efficacy and of perceived self-esteem and to compare them with learning outcomes in 1st year undergraduates.The study sample was chosen randomly. It consisted in 90 undergraduates from the faculties of Agriculture, Horticulture, Farm Management and Food Processing of the Banat's University of Agricultural Science and Veterinary Medicine "King Michael I of Romania" from Timisoara, Romania. The study hypothesis was that there is a direct proportional relationship between the feeling of self-efficacy and learning success in the tested students. A secondary study hypothesis was that there are no notable gender differences in the perception of self-efficacy in the tested students.

The General Self-Efficacy Scale (SES) contains 10 items and it evaluates a person's convictions on his/her own ability of overcoming difficulties while reaching targets. It was developed in 1981, in German, by MATTHIAS JERUSALEM AND RALF SCHWARZER and it has been used in studies and adapted in 33 languages. The SES Scale measures self-efficacy in everyday adjustment, confidence in the setting of goals, effort investment and persistence in action.

The Rosenberg Scale determines self-esteem. The "Self-esteem Scale" (RSES) was developed in 1965 by American sociologist of Jewish origin Morris Rosenberg and published the same year in "Society and the adolescent self-image". Self-esteem is a positive and negative orientation towards oneself, a global evaluation of one's personal merits and values. People are motivated to have a high self-esteem, which is not synonymous of selfishness. Self-esteem is just a component of the concept of self, and Rosenberg defined it as the totality of individual thoughts and feelings related to oneself as an object. Besides self-esteem, self-efficacy or artisanship, self-identities are also important parts of the concept of self.

Admission mean

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the goals of education in both secondary and tertiary education is increasing the feeling of self-efficacy in students. A high self-efficacy feeling leads to an increased level of learning success, reducing stress perception and intensifying the perception of welfare.

As for the personal traits of the students with a high level of self-efficacy feeling, they trust their abilities, and they perceive difficult tasks as challenges that need to be confronted and not threats that need to be avoided.

Obstacles are overcome with sustained efforts and failure is explained as insufficient effort or knowledge and skills: thus, failure has causes that can be solved. Even the most difficult situations are approached as controllable due to the feeling of self-control.

At the other pole, students with low self-efficacy avoid difficult tasks that they perceive as a personal threat, have a low level of aspiration, show little attachment to the targets and, confronted with difficult tasks, focus on the weak points or obstacles without focussing on solving strategies. They make little efforts and give up rather quickly, recover rather slowly after failure and consider failure the effect of irremediable personal deficiency. These people become victims of stress and depression.

Comparatively, self-esteem and self-efficacy suppose self-esteem as a general feeling of individual self-valorisation, a global perception of one's own value, while self-efficacy is related to the perception of one's own abilities in a certain field meant to reach a certain goal.

For instance, a student with extremely modest learning outcomes does not have a high level of self-efficacy regarding his/her student aptitudes, which does not necessarily affect his/her overall self-esteem.

The analysis of the factors influencing learning and resulting in learning success is the topic of numerous researches meant to improve the educational process.

We analysed, in our sample, the relationships between perceived self-efficacy, self-esteem and learning outcomes materialised in the admission mean.

After applying the questionnaire, the results of the perceived self-efficacy scale are as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

Results on the Self-Efficacy Scale

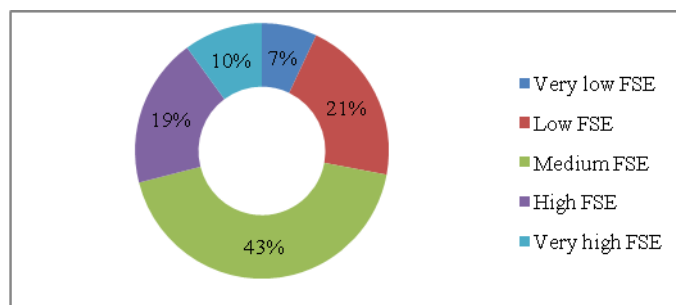| Scores	Self-efficacy type	Percentage
Raw score < 25 points	Very low FSE	7%
Score between 26-29 points	Low FSE	21%
Score between 30-33 points	Medium FSE	43%
Score between 34-37 points	High FSE	19%
Raw score above 38 points	Very high FSE	10%

Figure 1.Results on the self-efficacy scale

On the Rosenberg Scale, the results are as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2.

Results on the Rosenberg Scale

Score	Self-esteem Scale	Percentage
Score 10-16	Low self-esteem	21%
Score 17-33	Medium self-esteem	48%
Score 34-40	High self-esteem	31%

As for the admittance mean, it was 7.58; gender differences in the self-efficacy and self-esteem scales show a slight superiority of the male students of 0.60% and 0.81%, respectively.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of data pointed out that SES results are medium to superior, which could be explained for the people studying in a higher education institution. Success needs most often-constant efforts: in this case, low self-efficacy becomes a case of self-limitation. Self-efficacy refers to the convictions of the students regarding their ability of mobilising cognitive, behavioural and motivational resources to successfully attain a learning task. Expectations regarding one's own efficacy in the learning task influence thoughts, emotions and behaviours and, implicitly, performance associated with the task. The mean of learning outcomes (7.58) supports these medium-superior results. Results in self-esteem correspond to the Gauss curve, but the mean and superior scores are slightly advantaged. Taking into account that high self-esteem is a positive trait, teachers should encourage students to have high self-esteem providing proper challenges and success opportunities.Therefore, the main hypothesis is confirmed, while the secondary hypothesis is infirmed mainly due to male subjects.

Self-efficacy and self-esteem are developed and get high scores through exercise, positive feedback, i.e. through school experience and positive living. This shows teachers that, to guide students towards success and learning success, we need to pay equal attention to both education and training, to provide positive attitudes, to be open to knowledge and to explore the potential of the students while compensating useful behaviour.

Stimulating a positive perception of the self in students does not mean encouraging false attitudes of self-contentment and self-sufficiency. It means forging positive attitudes for self-knowledge and a proper perception of the self while valorising one's own traits and acquiring a feeling of responsibility and control of one's own school record.

The teacher-student relationship is the starting point in student personal development: thus, learning success occurs naturally due to higher motivation and not to coercive methods.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. BANDURA, A. (1986). Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory.Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
2.PINTRICH, P.R., &SHUNK, D.H.(1995). Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
3.RADU, I., Introducere în psihologia contemporană, Editura Sincron, Cluj, 1991
4.ROSENBERG, MORRIS. 1989. Society and the Adolescent Self-Image. Revised edition. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press 8. Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M., Generalized Self-Efficacy scale. In J. Weinman, S. Wright, & M. Johnston, Measures in health psychology: A user's portfolio. Causal and control beliefs, 1995, 35-37, Windsor, England: NFER-NELSON.
5.https://sites.google.com/site/psihoteste2015/website-builder