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The role of the family in building adolescents' self-esteem

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Abstract

This empirical research analyses the role of the family in building adolescents' self-esteem. We have used two questionnaires (to establish parental styles; to identify the level of self-esteem), for the interpretation of which we have used the Pearson correlation coefficient and the Z test. Within the experiment, we have carried out counselling activities with the parents of the subjects from the experimental sample. The results have confirmed a relationship between the authoritative style and positive self-esteem, which functioned in the case of parents' counselling in what it concerns the positive self-esteem and the improvement of students' school results.

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1. Introduction

The self-esteem is a concept in relation with the self-image and self-conscience concepts. The attempts to define self-esteem are numerous, most of them admitting that it represents the way in which each person assesses oneself in relation to the group belonging to, the value attributed to oneself, the positive or negative attitude towards oneself as well as the level of satisfaction that a person has with oneself (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2003; Mogonea, 2010). What distinguishes this concept from other similar concepts is the assessing component (Davis-Hean, Sandler, 2001; Băban, 2003).

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There is a global, general self-esteem consisting of internal factors (emotions, genetic, personality traits) and external ones (events, family, career etc.). Some authors distinguish between trait self-esteem – this being a value stable in time, as it is a part of the personality and the state self-esteem, which is much more labile – being affected and influenced by events, situations, emotions (Gilovich, Keltner & Nisbett, 2006; Lightfoot, Cole & Cole, 2009; Driscoll, 2013). The formation of self-esteem implies a long process, being correlated with the formation of one's self-image and self-conscience. Its evolution in time involves also downfall periods especially during transition periods from one stage to another, from one status to another, as it is the case for instance, in adolescence (due to the psycho-somatic changes) or grand age, as a consequence of the change in status, retirement and the change in tasks and responsibilities (Orth, Trzesniewski & Robins, 2010).

The idea according to which success, irrespective of the activity field and its form is correlated with the existence of a positive self-esteem is not new. Numerous studies (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2003; Crocker, Brook, Niiya & Villacorta, 2006) underline this link. In forming a positive self-esteem, the child's experiences during childhood play a significant importance alongside the parents' and educators' attitude towards himself.

The parental styles representing the interaction between parent and child were classified for the first time by Baumrind (in Martinez, Garcia, 2007; Huver, Otten, de Vries & Engels, 2009; Alsheikh, Parameswaran & Elhoweris, 2010; Nixon & Halpenny, 2010; Preethi & Rosa, 2012), in four categories resulting from the interaction of two axes: the one representing affection (from warmth to coldness, distance) and the one representing the absolute demands (from the smallest one to the greatest one): authoritarian (characterized by lack of affection and high, absolutistic exigencies); authoritative (characterized by great affection, but also high demands); permissive (strong affection and low demands); sloppy (low affection and low demands). There are studies in the field literature underlining that the role of the family environment is essential in the formation of personality especially in the first childhood (Gottfried & Gottfried, Bathurst, 1995; Talib, Mohamad & Mamat, 2011).

The period of adolescence is important for the process of self-esteem formation. The formation of self-esteem can be stimulated, encourages both by parents and teachers. The level of self-esteem is mirrored in the adolescent's attitude and behavior, both at home and at school. Hence, adolescents with a high level of self-esteem have the following characteristics: (Lavoie, 2012): they are capable of influencing positively the opinion and behavior of others; they tackle new situations positively and confidently; they have a high level of tolerance towards frustration; they accept easily responsibilities; they assess correctly situations; they communicate positive feelings about themselves; they succeed in having a good self-control and the belief that the things they are undergoing are the result of their own behavior and actions.

2. Objectives and hypotheses

The aim of the research was: to stimulate the shaping of a positive self-esteem, by counselling parents, in relation to their parenting styles. The objectives of the research were: Identify the parental styles of the parents of the adolescent pupils; Know the level of the adolescents' self-esteem; Establish connections between parental styles and adolescents' self-esteem; Implement counseling measures for parents in order to improve the self-esteem of their children (lectures with parents, extra-curricular activities, home visits, individual discussions); Establish a relation between the adolescents' self-esteem and their school results.

Our research was carried out during a school year, 2012-2013, and was based on a general hypothesis about the existence of a close relation between the parental educative styles and the low or high level of self-esteem of the teenagers, with direct implications in their school results. On the basis of the general hypothesis, we have shaped two means of action, seen as specific hypotheses: a) counselling the students' parents on the ways to stimulate the teenagers' self-esteem improves the students' self-esteem; b) There is a dependence relation between the improvement of self-esteem and school results.

3. Method

Participants - The sample of subjects was made up of 112 teenager students and 112 parents (from the family of each student, there was selected one of the parents or the legal representatives). Regarding the qualitative dimension

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