# STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION AMONG STUDENTS

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**Abstract**. Goal: to study the relationship between achievement motivation and self-esteem among students. Participants: 72 students aged 17-47 years (Mdn=23). Methods: Rosenberg's self-esteem scale, The Mehrabian Achieving Tendency Scale, State Self-Esteem Scale. Results: strong linear positive relationships were found between achievement motivation and state self-esteem, performance-oriented self-esteem, social self-esteem, global self-esteem. A moderate positive linear relationship was found between achievement motivation and appearance-oriented self-esteem.

**Key words:** achievement motivation, appearance self-esteem, global self-esteem, performance self-esteem, social self-esteem, state self-esteem.

**Introduction.** Highly motivated students are the future resource for the development and progress of a nation. At the same time, Brown and colleagues (1998) point out that motivating students is still a problem because enthusiasm for learning of some students is unpredictable. Students' failures in academic process, as well as misdirected motivation, are largely related to the beliefs that these students form – about their competence, about their physical and intellectual qualities, about their ability to interact with the environment.

These beliefs are related to the construct of self-esteem. In this regard, some researchers suggest that low achievement motivation may be due, among other things, to a factor of low self-esteem (e.g., Manafi et al., 2015; Olaoye & Olaoye, 2018). However, whether there really is a relationship between these two factors as such, and what is the nature of this relationship, is still an open question, although it has been being actively investigated (see, e.g., Ajayi, 2002; Hein & Hagger, 2007; Chen et al, 2018; Arhin & Amoako, 2019). Current study may contribute to this investigation.

Aim of the research: to study the relationship between achievement motivation and self-esteem of students.

Hypothesis: Achievement motivation is related to self-esteem.

**Theoretical basis. Self-Esteem.** According to Plotka and colleagues (2016), among modern theories of self-esteem, 3 main approaches can be distinguished: global self-esteem (self-esteem as a personality trait), state self-esteem (self-esteem as a temporary state) and self-evaluation of domain specific self-esteem (self-esteem as a multidimensional construct based on self-assessment in each specific area) (see, e.g., Fleming & Courtney, 1984; Fox, 2000; Brown & Marshal, 2006; Harris & Orth, 2019).

Global self-esteem. In the 1960s, the sociologist Morris Rosenberg described a peculiar approach to the self-esteem construct, global self-esteem. He considered it as some stable quality inherent in a person, as a relatively stable personality trait. Many researchers today continue to adhere to this view, arguing that global self-esteem develops at an early age and depends on the type of relationship with significant adults (parents, guardians), as well as on innate factors of temperament (Brown et al., 2001).

This approach argues that those feelings of self-attachment that characterize global self-esteem are not based on an assessment of one's qualities and skills in specific areas. Global self-esteem is stable throughout adulthood, with a likely genetic component associated with temperament and neuroticism

(Plotka et al, 2016). Ziegler-Hill and Jordan (2010) also confirm that global self-esteem is usually defined as a general personality trait.

State self-esteem. This approach considers self-esteem as a designation of self-evaluative emotional reactions to valence events. As noted by Plotka and colleagues (2016), many researchers use the term "sense of self-esteem" to describe that emotional state often referred to as "self-esteem", meanwhile "self-esteem trait" referred to how people generally feel about themselves. Other researchers dispute this, arguing that instantaneous emotional responses to positive and negative events do not provide an adequate analog for how people generally feel about themselves. According to them, self-esteem can and should be considered as a "state".

While people may feel good in general, they can sometimes feel insecure about themselves and even dislike themselves. As Kernis (1993) argues, fluctuations in "self-esteem status" are associated with increased sensitivity to and dependence on social evaluations, with increased concern for how one views oneself, and even with anger and hostility. In general, those with fragile self-esteem react extremely favorably to positive feedback and extremely defensive to negative feedback. Heatherton and Polivy (1991) explain that these temporary fluctuations in a person's attitude towards themselves is self-esteem, considered as a state.

Exploring the many factors that can affect one's current self-esteem, Heatherton and Polivy (1991) concluded that personality is characterized by the volatility of current (state) self-esteem, and the overall picture consists mainly of three facets: how well one evaluates own (i) performance and (ii) appearance and how satisfied he/she is with (iii) relationships with other people. This intersects with the ideas of another approach to considering the concept of self-esteem, which suggests that a person builds overall self-esteem on the basis of constant self-assessment in various areas of life.

Self-evaluation – Domain Specific self-esteem. In this approach, self-esteem is seen as the summarized result of how people evaluate their various abilities and qualities in various areas of life. The number of these spheres and their content varies from author to author. Brown and Marshall (2006) prefer to call these beliefs about one's abilities and qualities self-evaluations or self-appraisals because they refer to how people evaluate their physical parameters, intellectual abilities and personality characteristics.

Even Rosenberg and colleagues (1995), speaking about the sustainability of global self-esteem, note that it is impossible to understand the whole picture of an individual's self-esteem, considering only the global component. The authors note that it is also necessary to take into account the specific aspects of self-esteem. These aspects include physical self-esteem, academic self-esteem, social self-esteem, etc. (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985).

Based on the considered abundance of theoretical approaches to the concept of self-esteem, it can be seen that there is no unambiguous interpretation of this concept, as well as its specific content. Self-esteem is appropriate to consider as a stable feature or attitude of an individual towards himself, which manifests itself in a feeling of approval or disapproval of oneself, or as a judgment about one's own worth, which are found in the individual's attitudes. Self-esteem may be stable in its basis, but vary depending on the current state of the individual and the situation. It can also differ in different areas of human life: appearance-oriented self-respect, social self-respect, etc.

Achievement motivation. Similar to the concept of self-esteem, there are several different interpretations of the concept of "achievement motivation". However, unlike the construct of self-esteem, the views of the researchers on the phenomenon of achievement motivation are not so disparate.

According to Murray (1938), achievement motivation is an unconscious impulse to act, an intention to overcome various obstacles on the way to achieving significant heights in any area of life, in order to increase self-esteem. McClelland (1974) described achievement motivation as the desire of an individual to achieve success in various activities. He and Atkinson (1964) laid in this concept two main motives: the need of the individual to achieve success and the need to avoid failure. Researcher Heckhausen (1967)

writes that achievement motivation can be defined as the desire to increase or maintain at the highest possible level one's own abilities in all activities in which some standard of excellence is implied, and where the performance of such actions can, therefore, either be successful, or unsuccessful.

The American Psychological Association Dictionary (APA, 2019) provides the following definitions of achievement motivation:

– the desire to work well and be successful (in this interpretation, this term is often used as a synonym for "need for achievement");

– the desire to overcome difficulties and cope with obstacles that arise on the way.

High personality scores on the achievement motivation factor tend to indicate that he/she will set ever higher standards. Such individuals are more persistent and diligent workers than their equally gifted counterparts, but with lower levels of achievement motivation (APA, 2019).

Elliot and McGregor's (2001) offered achievement motivation model, which suggests two broad classes of goals: mastery achievement ("mastering" a given task or required skills) and performance demonstration (showing superior performance compared to others).

As Pintrich and Schank (2002) point out, various theories of motivation focus on explaining goal-related activity. Many early theories of motivation explained this activity in terms of drives, instincts, and other intrinsic traits. Some theories explain motivation in terms of behavioral associations associated with random rewards (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). The authors also write that modern theories of motivation focus more on social-cognitive processes. This view is represented in motivation attribution theory, which links achievement striving to how people interpret their successes and failures in achievement situations (Weiner, 1979). Expectancy-value theory links achievement motivation to individual expectations and the subjective perception of the value of those expectations (Eccles, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

As in the case of self-esteem, some researchers believe that achievement motivation is situational and also multidimensional. The level of individual motivation can vary from area to area (for example, high career achievement motivation, but low financial achievement motivation), as well as depending on the situation, with the influence of other factors (Cassidy & Lynn, 1989). Current study considers general achievement motivation of a person.

**Analysis of Empirical Research on the Relationship Between Achievement Motivation and Self-Esteem.** In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the study of personal resources (cognitive, affective, emotional, etc.) that contribute to the successful adaptation and positive development of young people in an academic environment, despite the difficulties they may encounter (Chen et al., 2018). One of the most prominent approaches to studying goals in an academic context is Elliot and McGregor's (2001) theory that the motivation and intentions that guide students in learning are at the heart of their success. Studies of samples of university students based on explicit methods show that self-esteem is positively associated with achievement motivation and negatively associated with failure avoidance motivation (Chen et al., 2018; Shim et al., 2012).

In her study of female college students in Nigeria, Ajayi (2002) found results that showed a statistically significant relationship between achievement motivation and self-esteem among the subjects.

Baumeister and colleagues (2003) found that high levels of self-esteem are an important predictor of good student performance. Exploring the concept of self-esteem in terms of an individual's physical health, Fox (2000) concluded that high self-esteem scores are associated with choices, persistence, and achievement in a wide range of healthy lifestyle behaviors. He found that people who are motivated to eat healthy and who believe they can stick to a regular exercise schedule have higher levels of self-esteem.

Hein and Hagger (2007) suggested that the presence of autonomous personal motives (particularly in the context of physical activity) increases an individual's overall achievement motivation, which in turn has an effect on global self-esteem.

Arhin and Amoako (2019) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and student academic achievement using a correlation design on 162 preselected university students. The results revealed a strong positive relationship between subjects' academic performance and global self-esteem.

Manafi, Movahed and Hejazi (2016) explored the role of self-esteem in motivating students to achieve. ANOVA results showed significant differences between students depending on their level of self-esteem and achievement motivation. The results of the regression analysis showed that the level of self-esteem predetermines the motivation of students to achieve.

Zoabi (2012) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and motivation to learn among students. The results showed a positive relationship between self-esteem and motivation to learn. Odam-Mensah (2019) showed in his study that self-esteem largely predicts achievement motivation. Current research is an addition to the list of the mentioned studies of the relationship between self-esteem and achievement motivation constructs.

Method. Participants. The study involved 72 females, Russian-speaking students of higher education facilities in various countries, aged 17-47 years (Mdn = 23, M=26, SD=7,90).

Measures. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) is a concise, simple, and convenient way to measure global self-esteem. According to Rosenberg (1965), self-esteem is a person's positive or negative attitude towards himself and the evaluation of his own thoughts and feelings in general in relation to himself. High scores indicate a high level of global self-esteem, low scores indicate a person's low global self-esteem.

State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES; Heatherton&Polivy, 1991) Heatherton and Polivy (1991) note that there are 3 interrelated factors in this scale. (1) Performance Self-esteem – people with a high level of this component of self-esteem feel confident in their intelligence and abilities. (2) Social Self-esteem – if a person is confident that others, especially significant others, appreciate and respect him, the indicator of social self-esteem will be high. (3) Appearance Self-esteem refers to how a person considers their inherent physical characteristics, which include athletic skills, physical attractiveness, the presence or absence of any physical defect, and also reflects attitudes towards a sense of race and ethnicity. High and low scores indicate high and low appearance self-esteem, respectively.

The Mehrabian Achieving Tendency Scale (MATS; Mehrabian, 1968) allows to identify two opposing aspirations of the individual – to achieve success and avoid failure. High total scores indicate the dominance of the desire for success. Low scores indicate the low motivation of the individual in achievements, expressed in the desire to avoid failures.

**Results.**

1. General state self-esteem has a strong positive relationship with achievement motivation $rS(72) = .63$, $p < .001$, large effect size.

2. Performance self-esteem has a strong positive relationship with achievement motivation $rS(72) = .51$, $p < .001$, large effect size.

3. Social self-esteem has a strong positive statistically significant relationship with achievement motivation $rS(72) = .66$, $p < .001$, large effect size.

4. Appearance self-esteem has a moderate positive statistically significant relationship with achievement motivation $rS(72) = .49$, $p < .001$, mean effect size.

5. Global self-esteem has a strong positive statistically significant relationship with achievement motivation $rS(72) = .54$, $p < .001$, large effect size.

Thus, it was found that with an increase in achievement motivation, following indicators also increase:
• global self-esteem;
• state self- esteem;
• performance self-esteem;
• social self- esteem;
• appearance self-esteem.

That is, the more the subjects strive to achieve success, the more they will be inclined to evaluate themselves as internally positive, to have greater confidence in individual worth and an adequate assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, and vice versa. They will also to a greater extent maintain self-esteem even when failing.

In addition, the more they strive to achieve success, the more they feel confident in their intelligence, personal abilities, and that others, especially significant others, appreciate and respect them. At the same time, the opposite is also true: the higher the indicators of self-esteem (global, state and its types), the higher the motivation for the individual's achievements.

**Discussion.** These results confirm the findings of previous studies (e.g., Ajayi, 2002; Chen et al., 2011; Arhin & Amoako, 2019). In particular, the strong relationship found between achievement motivation and global self-esteem is consistent with the findings of a study by Hein and Hagger (2007). The authors hypothesized that the presence of autonomous personal motives (particularly in the context of physical activity) increases an individual's overall achievement motivation, which in turn has an effect on global self-esteem.

Ajayi (2002) suggests that the relationship between self-esteem and achievement motivation is causal, and that the level of achievement will depend precisely on the results of evaluation or judgments of self-worth. Chen and colleagues (2018) argue that in order to increase the level of achievement of students, to reduce their self-restraint from achieving meaningful results, it is necessary to increase their self-esteem.

The way in which achievement motivation increases with an increase in actual self-esteem has also been noted before (e.g. Zoabi, 2012; Nwankwo et al., 2013). The results obtained in this study indicate the same: if the individual's current self-esteem grows, his desire for achievement will also become stronger. This means that students who score higher on self-esteem scales will also tend to show a stronger need for achievement in and outside of academic life.

The regression analysis conducted by Zoabi (2012) showed that achievement motivation among students is determined by the level of their self-esteem. The results of the study are consistent with the findings of Manafi, Mowahhed and Hijazi (2015), who also found that self-esteem predicts student achievement motivation. Similar results confirming a strong relationship between achievement motivation and self-esteem in students have been obtained by other researchers whose samples consisted of representatives of different cultures (e.g. Ajayi, 2002; Shim et al., 2012; Odame-Mensah 2019).

The study was conducted on a target sample (72 people), which calls into question the relevance of applying its results in relation to the general mass of students. When forming the sample, the cultural factor was also not taken into account (only Russian-speaking students took part), although similar results obtained by other researchers on representatives of various language groups and countries indicate that the relationship between achievement motivation and self-esteem most likely exists regardless from the cultural aspect. However, this assumption may be premature and requires further verification. In view of the above-mentioned limitations that arose during the conduct of this study, several recommendations for further work can be put forward. The first and necessary action is to increase the sample of follow-up studies. It is also possible to involve implicit methods for a deeper analysis of the relationship between constructs.

Dividing the sample by age groups, by stages of the learning process (for example, 1st year, graduate, undergraduate; beginning of the semester, exams, etc.), by marital status, work experience and other indicators is also a prospect for further studying the relationship between achievement motivation and self-esteem. Such a "narrowing" of the field of study, specification of the parameters of the sample, can turn the existing results upside down.

The sample size also does not allow obtaining reliable results from a more detailed study of the relationship found (for example, when dividing the sample according to the leading motive of achievements or according to the level of self-esteem).

Another vector for the development of this topic may be the use of methods that consider other subscales of constructs. Most of the research conducted to date on these constructs to collect data on self-esteem uses the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which reflects only global self-esteem. However, the technique of the Scale of State Self-Esteem allows you to obtain data on the "subtypes" of current self-esteem. A good link between these methods could be the Self-Esteem Stability Scale (Chabrol et al., 2006).

**Conclusion.** An analysis of the concept of self-esteem showed that there is no unambiguous interpretation of this concept, as well as its specific content. Self-esteem is appropriate to consider as a stable feature or attitude of an individual towards himself/herself, which manifests itself in a feeling of approval or disapproval of oneself, or as a judgment about one's own worth, which are found in the individual's attitudes. However, in addition to a global, stable construct, it is also advisable to consider self-esteem as a changeable state, denoting a person's self-evaluative emotional reactions to valence events.

Concerning the content of the concept of self-esteem, there are two provisions that are accepted by most researchers: self-esteemn is a generalized self-attitude, which, firstly, is a holistic, one-dimensional and universal formation that expresses the degree of positive attitude of an individual to his own self-image; secondly, it integrates with individual subscales.

According to a study conducted by Plotka and colleagues (2016), among modern theories of self-esteem, 3 main approaches can be distinguished: global self-esteem (self-esteem as a personality trait), state self-esteem (self-esteem as a temporary, current state) and self-evaluation of domain specific self-esteem (self-esteem as a multidimensional construct based on self-assessment in each specific area).

The construct of achievement motivation has been found to be the desire to work well and be successful, as well as the desire to overcome difficulties and cope with obstacles that arise along the way (APA, 2019).

The main theories of achievement motivation are: the theory of McClelland (1987), in which motivation is based on the human need for achievement, power and belonging; Atkinson's theory (1964), according to which everyone is driven by two motives: achieving success and avoiding failure; Elliot and McGregor's (2001) achievement motivation model with its two classes of goals: to master one's skills and/or to demonstrate one's performance.

Key empirical studies on the relationship between achievement motivation and self-esteem were analyzed (e.g., Ajayi, 2002; Hein & Hagger, 2007; Chen et al., 2011; Arhin & Amoako, 2019). These studies have indicated that there is a relationship between achievement motivation and self-esteem, this relationship is observed in representatives of different cultures, both sexes.

Current study confirms the previously identified links between the constructs under study and complements the overall picture of its understanding. As a result of the empirical research, the following conclusions were obtained:

A strong positive relationship was found between global self-esteem/state self-esteem (performance and social) and achievement motivation. A moderate positive relationship was found between achievement motivation and state self-esteem focused on appearance. The higher the students' self-esteem, the higher their motivation to achieve, and vice versa.

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