

**Georgeta PÂNIȘOARĂ**

University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences

**Cristina SANDU**

University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences

**Nicoleta DUȚĂ**

University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences

DIFFERENCES REGARDING  
SELF-ESTEEM AND THE  
COMMUNICATION STYLE  
DEPENDING ON THE LEVEL  
OF EDUCATION

Empirical  
study

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**Keywords**

*Self-esteem*

*Communication style*

*Education*

*Interpersonal relationships*

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**Abstract**

*The present paper aims to study the differences in self-esteem and the communication style, depending on the level of education (at high school and university subjects). It is analyzed also how the positive self-esteem can correlate with a style of communication and assertively-positive approach. The participants are 120 subjects, 60 high school students and 60 students. The data was collected using two instruments: the Rosenberg questionnaire and a questionnaire on communication style. The data analyzed using a t test for independent samples and a Pearson correlation test with SPSS statistical software. The results show that there are differences regarding the self-esteem and the communication style depending on the level of education.*

## INTRODUCTION

As social phenomenon, the communication implies the whole psychological settings of a person, so when somebody communicates, he or she realizes social interactions, which are being supported by social abilities. „The behavior of a person depends on the behavior of another's in every situation of communication. In a group we are often in a relationship of verbal and non-verbal interaction. Any modification of one's person behavior influences another person”. (Amado & Guittet, 2007).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Many definitions of self-esteem have been advanced; they are often contradictory in nature. Often, self-esteem is viewed as a component of a more inclusive construct, typically labeled self-concept or self-perception (Beane & Lipka, 1980; Dickstein, 1977; Rosenberg, 1979). Self-concept is viewed as the aspect of one's self-image that is basically descriptive and nonjudgmental; whereas self-esteem is part of those aspects or attitudes which are classified as self-evaluative (apud. Scott et al., 1996, p.286).

In accordance with the study on how strong communication contributes to student and school success (Bagin, 2006) communication is the heart of education and school communication is a dynamic part of education success. Effective two-way communication is cited as a necessary trait for success at all levels of education (Bagin, 2006).

It is very important that one or both parents have a certain style of communication, assertive or supportive. For example, “the tested prediction model of family satisfaction as a whole has shown that implementation and explanation of rules of behavior, evaluation and consideration of consequences of the actions undertaken by children have a great significance, besides affective component of mothers and fathers upbringing style, regulatory dimension of mothers and fathers upbringing style (Pânișoară G., Pânișoară I.O, Duță N., Sandu C., 2015).

For Zlate (cited by Dumitru, 1998), the group's interpersonal interactions represent „the meaning and the context used by people for learning to develop the capacity of communication, to establish favorable contacts with others, to socialize, to become an active member of a group, to take risks, to cooperate, to work together with group members”.

Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham (Floyd, 2013) invented Johari Window in 1950, a model for understanding and knowledge of the human personality. This „window” is divided into four smaller glass panes, each with a different role in

relation to the information known about us or not. So the four areas: information known to us and by others; information known to others but not to us; information known to us, but not by others; information unknown to us and the others.

The Johari Window's four regions are as follows, showing the quadrant numbers and commonly used names (see Figure no 1) (apud. Lall & Sharma, 2009):

1. *Open area, open self, free area, free self, or 'the arena'*: what is known by the person about him/herself and is also known by others.

2. *Blind area, blind self, or 'blinds pot'*: what is unknown by the person about him/herself but which others know

3. *Hidden area, hidden self, avoided area, avoided self or 'façade'*: what the person knows about him/herself and others do not know.

4. *Unknown area or unknown self*: what is unknown by the person about him/herself and is also unknown by others.

These four areas are important for human relationships; for example if we receive feedback from others it is possible to find out certain things about us, things we did not know or which we deny that exist.

Self-esteem is influenced by social factors such as relationships with friends and the other important people but also from the activities in which the adolescents succeed best. Also, Harter (1999) indicates that self-esteem is related to the physical appearance; this has a greater importance to girls than boys (Mruk, 2006).

According to Knightsmith (2015) „pupils with low self-esteem or body confidence are more likely than their peers to choose subjects which involve less interaction, less self-expression and lower risk of failure. Consequently, they lose this wealth of opportunities to develop their learning, understanding, passion and enjoyment. It's also common for pupils to directly associate the beauty with success and to feel that their appearance is a barrier to their aspirations” (Knightsmith, 2015).

Rosenberg emphasizes an important aspect named barometric self-esteem, which is an oscillating, changeable trait. Self-image includes on one hand the findings on his own being and on the other hand attitudes and future projects. Research on self-esteem (Meskauskiene, 2015) showed that during late adolescence, self-esteem begins to decrease, due to strained relations with family and interpersonal relationships with colleagues.

The communication style is defined as a set of particularities of specific characteristics of a person in the act of communication (Hasson, 2012).

The communication style is an index of how a person organizes his/her interpersonal relations. There are four communication styles based on attitude and communication patterns acquired by each person:

- introspective style: the tendency to hide, to analyze passively and to postpone decisions;
- aggressive style: the tendency to stand out, impose himself at any costs; this attitude stimulates aggressiveness, hostility, antipathy;
- persuasive style: a preference for a role behind the scenes, the tendency to expect the favorable moment to come to light and to highlight the tendency to search for hidden intentions behind any claims of others;
- assertive style: self-imposed attitude, but in an honest way, stimulating clearly his/her personal rights without hurting the others; the capacity to follow your interests without hurting the others.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Purpose

This research aims to analyze the differences between pupils and students in terms of the level of self-esteem and communication style and the identification of correlations between these two variables.

### Hypothesis

The hypotheses of our study were:

- There is a different level of self-esteem and a different style of communication between students and pupils.
- There is a statistically significant correlation between positive self-esteem and a positive style of communication among young people.

### Participants

The study included a total of 120 young people, 60 students from the University of Bucharest and 60 high school students from Bucharest. The participants were selected randomly, including both male subjects and female.

### Instruments

We used for this study, two instruments: „Self-Esteem Scale” was drafted in 1965 by the American sociologist (of Jewish origin) Morris Rosenberg (Self-Esteem Scale - RSES) and published in the same year in „Society and the adolescent self-image” Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press and consists of ten items with Likert possible response on the scale from 1 to 4.

The second instrument is the Questionnaire of approaching of communication situations and includes 15 items with four variants to answer every time; this aims to identify four communication styles: aggressive-confrontational style, assertive - persuasive style, observer - introspective style, persuasive - reactive style.

### Procedure

First we presented instructions to participants. The testing lasted for 15 minutes.

## RESULTS

The data collected from the test was introduced into SPSS statistical software. In Table no 1 there are presented descriptive statistics (mean, median and sum) for each questionnaire.

Taking into account the independent variable „education”, one can observe a higher average obtained by pupils at testing instruments both at the level of self-esteem and an assertive communication style-convincing.

As the analysis of descriptive data (mean, standard deviation) describes, it is clear that psychologically, high school students manifest a high level of self-esteem, which leads to the idea that self-confidence is positive and decreases with age.

In Table no 2 we can observe the results of t test for independent samples, taking into account the independent variable - level of education-, we can say that there are statistically significant differences between pupils and students concerning self-esteem (Sig = ,456).

According to the result of the t test, we can interpret a psychological process of personal development of the pupils commencing one confident self-positive, consisting of esteem and self-image and lead to a self-knowledge that helps to develop interpersonal relationships.

Table no 3 presents the correlation between the two tests; we used the Pearson correlation test and can observe a negative correlation index (Sig = -,624), which implies an inverse correlation between the two variables, where one is increased and the other lowered.

This result leads to the next psychological argument: a high level of self-esteem involves the development of a very persuasive and confrontational communication style.

Figure no 2 shows the differences between pupils and students in respect to the level of self-esteem, according to the questionnaire results Rosenberg, so we can observe high scores of the pupils, therefore a high esteem and self-image.

The Figure no 3 indicates the distribution of responses to questionnaire on communication style, the assertive-persuasive style is found in both groups of subjects.

## CONCLUSIONS

The research results have shown that there are significant differences between pupils and students at the self-esteem level, these ones leading to possible issues of research on these differences and the reasons that underlie them.

Therefore an analysis of the spectrum of communication and prevailing style of communication can be seen as an expression of the social experiences and also of the personal transformations all together.

In conclusion, data analysis supports the idea that self-confidence and style of communication are essential in interpersonal relations.

Based on the literature review in this paper and according to the results of the research we synthesized a series of general recommendations for practice on education and self-esteem:

1. Self-esteem and responsibility must be closely related to the educational program.

2. Educate every educator – through preservation and in-service training – in self-esteem and responsibility.

3. Give students opportunities to do community service.

4. Be sensitive to the needs of students at risk of failure.

5. Use the art to help develop self-esteem and responsibility

6. Provide cooperative learning opportunities.

7. Providing opportunities for pupils to ask questions one to one, as well as in front of the class.

8. Facilitating and encouraging a questioning approach from every pupil.

9. Using male and female case studies and role models of all shapes and sizes from a range of cultures.

In line with the study the literature (Scott et al., 1996) the importance of school staff as potential role model for increasing and maintaining student self-esteem can be an important area of future exploration. Daily interaction with students seems to be a potentially great way of addressing the issue of student self-esteem.

Accordingly, the results of research can constitute points of reflection and valuable premises for the personnel of educational institutions in the future.

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**Table No.1 Descriptive Statistics of studied variables**

	education	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
chestrosenberg	High school pupils	60	28.6833	2.84332	.36707
	Students	60	25.0500	3.25954	.42080
chestcommunication	High school pupils	60	2.3000	.67145	.08668
	Students	60	2.2000	1.02180	.13191

**Table No. 2. T test for unrelated data for all studied variables independent samples test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
chestrosenberg	Equal variances assumed	,200	,456	,346	66	,731	-,118	,340	-,797	,562
	Equal variances not assumed			,346	65,029	,731	-,118	,340	-,797	,562
chestcommunication	Equal variances assumed	,158	,692	,467	66	,642	-,176	,378	-,931	,578
	Equal variances not assumed			,467	64,596	,642	-,176	,378	-,932	,579

**Table No. 3. Correlations between tests**

		chestrosenberg	chestcommunication
chestrosenberg	Pearson Correlation	1	-.624
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.179
	N	120	120
chestcommunication	Pearson Correlation	-.624	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.179	
	N	120	120

		<b>Self</b>	
		<i>Known</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
<b>Others</b>	<i>Known</i>	<b>1 Open/Free Area</b>	<b>2 Blind Area</b>
	<i>Unknown</i>	<b>3 Hidden Area</b>	<b>4 Unknown Area</b>

Figure No. 1 Description for the Johari Window's four regions

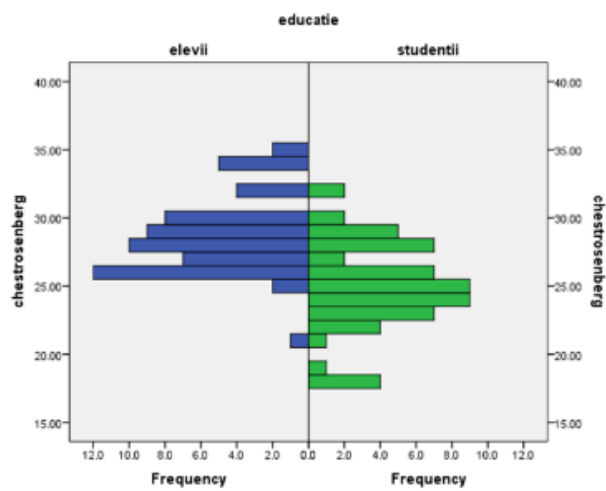


Figure No. 2 Histogram for self-esteem

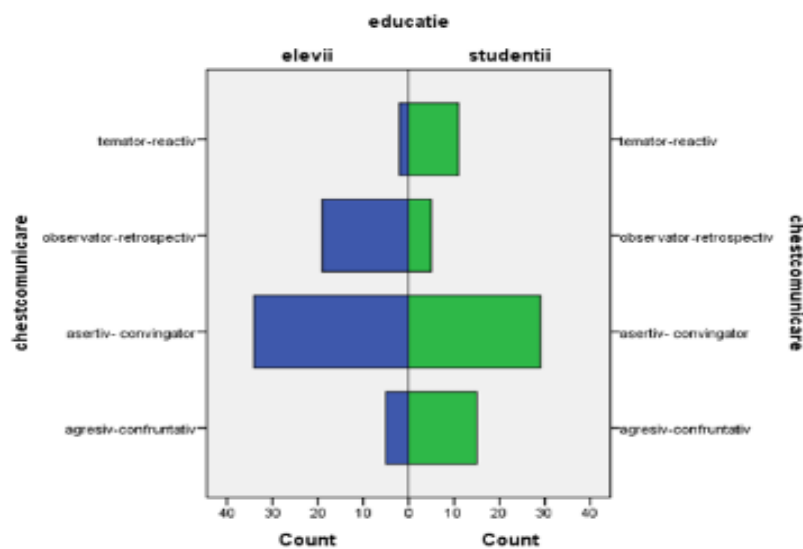


Figure No. 3 Histogram for communication