

EFFECTS OF SHYNESS ON THE SELF ESTEEM OF 9th GRADE FEMALE STUDENTS

Ms. Muqaddas Butt

Department of Education
Fatima Jinnah Women University
Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Ms. Samra Moosa

Department of Education, Fatima Jinnah Women University
Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Dr. Muhammad Ajmal

Lecturer, Distance, Non formal & Continue education department,
Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad

Dr Fazalur Rahman

Lecturer, Early childhood & Elementary Teacher Education Department
Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad. E-mail: fazalaiou@yahoo.com

Abstract

The research was conducted to explore the effects of shyness on the self esteem of 9th grade female students. The objectives of the research were to identify the symptoms of shyness, to explore the causes of shyness, to find out the relationship of shyness with the self esteem and to examine the effects of shyness on the self esteem of 9th grade female students. For this purpose exploratory research design was used. Total 150 female students from 5 Federal Government schools of Rawalpindi were selected as sample. By using purposive sampling technique only those students were selected who were observed by the researchers and were identified as shy by their teachers. For data collection two standardized scales were used as research tools. For identifying the level of Shyness, a scale developed by Dr. M. Vanaja, Ms. N. Sneha Latha & Dr. Digumarti Bhaskar Rao in 1998 was used, and for self esteem Rosenberg's self esteem scale developed in 1965 was used. Shyness scale contained 25 items and self esteem scale was consisted on 10 items. It was found that weak positive relationship existed between shyness and self esteem. The results indicated that shyness affects the self esteem of 9th grade female students. A variation in the level of shyness was also found among students. It was explored that some students suffered from occasional shyness while, other experienced acute shyness, which obstructed the development of students. Teachers can play a vital role in overcoming students' shyness by using different techniques in the class. Parents should also encourage and motivate the shy children.

Key Words: Shyness, self esteem, correlation, occasional shyness, acute shyness.

INTRODUCTION

Honig (1987) defined shyness as a discomfort in interpersonal situations that interferes with one's goals. It is a form of excessive self-focus, a preoccupation of thoughts, feelings and physical reactions. It may vary from mild social awkwardness to totally inhibiting social phobias. Shyness may be chronic or dispositional, serving as a personality trait that is central in one's definition.

According to Byrnes (1984) in class rooms, two types of students are present mostly, social isolates who are actively rejected and those who are neglected or overlooked. Rejected students are those who are seen as aggressive and disruptive. They are typically un-welcomed in the class rooms. While there is a second class of students who are categorized as isolated students. These students are forgotten and have no friends. They are unnoticed by the teachers and peers because of their shyness and passivity. These students are susceptible to self-consciousness in social situations that make them more conspicuous and psychologically unprotected. Due to shyness the child suffers from lack of confidence, social anxiousness, embarrassment, speech dissiliences and low speaking voice. Shy students are perceived less friendly and assertive than others. Henderson & Zimbardo (1996) described that shyness is basically shrinking back from life that weakens the bonds of human connection. Many students reports freezing encounters which lowers self esteem and interferes with motivation and pro activity that leads to an avoidant and passive interaction style. The effects of shyness on the self esteem of students have usually been observed highly negative.

Self-esteem is the disposition to experience oneself as being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and of being worthy of happiness. It is the confidence in one's ability to learn, make appropriate choices and decisions, and respond effectively to change. The combination of shyness and low self-esteem undermine students' abilities and develop weak personalities.

The aim of the study was to examine the effects of shyness on the self-esteem of 9th grade female students. This was an exploratory study which was intended to investigate, how shyness when affects self-esteem create problems in normal life of student.

Review of Literature

Crozier (2000) defined shyness as a "state of discomfort or inhabitation in interpersonal situations that interferes with pursuing one's interpersonal or professional goals". According to Cheek & Melchoir (1990) shyness involves the tendency to feel worried, awkward or tense when in the presence of others due to the prospect of interpersonal evaluation. Zolton and Long (1997) said that shyness is a fear of, or withdrawal from, other people or social situations, can have many different causes depending on the individual child and the specific circumstances. Shyness is something that all people experience at one time or another. In most cases it is a normal, temporary behavior. In children, some shyness is normal, especially when they are around 5-6 months of age, and then again at about two years of age. Shyness at these ages is considered a normal part of development. Shyness becomes a problem in a child when it interferes with relationships with other people, with social situations, school, and other important aspects of a child's life.

In the light of the results of many psychological surveys Murray (2000) concluded that substantial number of people regards themselves as shy. Shyness becomes problematic when it leads to the patterns of behavior that includes reluctance to enter social situations discomfort and inhibition in the presence of others exaggerated self, unresponsiveness, an increasingly negative social concept, or a combination of these (Honig 1987).

Shy individuals are anxious and unsure of themselves in social situations and often try to avoid interacting with others (Wills & DePaulo, 1999). Minimum level of shyness does not create problems for children. Frequent exposure to a particular or different situation makes them confident. But if they avoid contact with people, children of their age or exposure to different situations than shyness can create different problems for them (Henderson & Zimbardo, 1996).

Causes of Shyness

The causes of shyness have not been demonstrated adequately to justify any firm statements on the issue. However, shyness experts identify as possible causes (a) genes predisposing a person to shyness, (b) a less than firm attachment bond between parent and child, (c) poor acquisition of social skills, or (d) parents, siblings, or others harshly and frequently teasing or criticizing a child. Some Children are dispositional shy: they are more likely than other children to react to new social situations with shy behavior. Even these children, however, may show shyness only certain kinds of social encounters. Shy children tend to engage in significantly less social misbehavior than other children. This may occur because shy children care so much about what others think of them. (Sanson, 1996)

Dupper (2000) cited Bullock (1998) who described a number of factors that may contribute to the feeling of loneliness and problematic shyness in young children including moving to a new school or neighborhood, losing a friend, losing a object or possession, experiencing the divorce of parents, experiencing the death of pet or significant person being rejected by peers, lacking the social skills to make friends or possessing personal characteristics as shyness, anxiety and low self esteem that contribute to the difficulty in making friends.

Some aspects of shyness are learned. Children's cultural background and family environment offer models of social behavior. Chinese children in a day care have been found to be more socially reticent than Caucasians, and Swedish children report more social discomfort than Americans. Some parents, by labeling their children as shy, appear to encourage a self-fulfilling prophecy; adults may encourage shy behavior in social interaction, thus reinforcing shy behavior (Zimbardo & Radl, 1981).

Strategies to Overcome Shyness

Malouff (2008) suggested the following strategies to help the children to overcome their shyness.

- Tell the children about times when you acted bashful
- Explain to the children how they will benefit from acting outgoing

- Prevent labeling of the children as "shy"
- Expose the children to unfamiliar settings and people
- Prompt the children to interact with others
- Reward the children for outgoing behavior
- Praise others' outgoing behavior in the presence of the children
- Read books with the children about individuals who overcome shyness or fears
- Eliminate teasing of the children or reduce the impact
- Teach the children to identify and to verbally express their emotions
- Coordinate your efforts with those of other relevant adults
- Consult a counselor, psychologist, or physician
- Relationship of Shyness with Self-Esteem

Relationship of Shyness with Self-Esteem

Shy people are seen less friendly than others, maybe a bit standoffish, even cold in some circumstances.

Jones (2009) reported that shy children probably even see themselves in a more negative than positive light. Because of this worry, their thoughts and strengths are limited to a very small circle of people; they are in fact only limited by their own thoughts and emotions. They constantly think that others are slighting them, insulting them, or attacking them in some way. The shy person can actually handicap themselves with negative thoughts and wind up using their shyness as a crutch and an excuse for not pursuing more social occasions, "I can't handle these kinds of situations because I'm so shy." Of course the more they tell themselves things like this, the harder it becomes to socialize, make friends, and establish relationships, both personal and professional. It becomes a self-defeating behavior. This kind of self-defeating behavior leads to more and more avoidance of any or all social encounters, until they become frozen in fear and completely unable to function in normal social circumstances. They quite literally lose hope in their own ability to function normally in these circumstances, so they quit trying. Chazan, Laing & Davies, (1994) argued that if the children (adult) feel that there is a discrepancy between the way they are behaving and the way they would like to react, their self esteem is likely to be low. To avoid negative feeling, children may lower their expectations of themselves and accept a lower level of performance or social interaction than they are capable of, or may try to avoid further feeling of failure by withdrawing from the situation in which they feel that their self esteem to be threatened.

Zimbardo (1977) pointed out that one of the most serious consequences of being shy is unwillingness to ask for help. People who are shy usually have low self esteem. People who are shy who have low self esteem but there is more to shyness than just low self esteem. If that the person is a stranger people with high self esteem are often less willing than people with low self esteem to ask for help. Abused women with high self esteem are less likely to seek treatment or counseling than abused women with low self esteem. Maintaining self esteem seems important to people who have a very positive self image. According to Kalichman, Simons & Santrock (1994) self esteem is an important component of personality, which refers to how we feel about the self or how we value ourselves. It is the individual's private feeling that is derived from one's perception and appraisal of different attributes of the self. Self esteem consists of general feeling of worth and competence associated with one's own self.

Types of Self Esteem

Reece and Brandt (2005) believed there are two types of self esteem; high self esteem and low self esteem. The level of self esteem has a powerful impact on behavior. The level of our self esteem is not set once and for all in childhood. It can grow throughout our lives or it can deteriorate.

Characteristics of High Self-Esteem

Brandt and Reece (2005) identified some characteristic of people with high self esteem.

- They are future oriented and are not overly concerned with past mistakes or failures. They learn from their errors but are not immobilized by them. They believe that every experience has some thing to teach if they are willing to learn.
- They are better able to cope with life's problems and disappointments. Successful people realize that problems need no depress them or make them anxious. It is their attitude towards the problem that makes all the difference.

- They are able to feel all dimensions of emotion without letting those emotions affect their behavior in a negative way. They realize that emotions cannot be handled either by repressing them or by giving them free rein.
- They are less likely to take things personally. Don Miguel Ruiz, author of the best selling book *The Four Agreements*, cautions to avoid taking others comments personally: “When you make it strong habit not to take anything personally , you avoid many upsets in life”. He says that when you react strongly to gossip or strongly worded criticism you suffer for nothing. Ruiz notes that many of these messages come from people who are unable to respect you because they do not respect themselves.
- They are able to accept other people as unique, talented individuals. They learn to accept others for who they are and what they can do. People with high self esteem built mutual trust based on each individual’s uniqueness. Accepting others is a good indication that you accept yourself.
- They exhibit a variety of self confident behaviors. They accept compliments or gifts by saying “Thank you”, without making self critical excuses and without feeling obligated to return the favor. They can laugh at their situation without self ridicule. They let others to be right or wrong without attempting to correct or ridicule them. They feel free to express opinions even if their ideas differ from those of peers or parents.

Characteristics of Low Self-Esteem

Johnson (2004) identified some characteristics of low self esteem people:

- Fearful of exploring his/her real life
- Believes that others are responsible for how he/she feels
- Fearful of taking responsibility for his/her own emotions and actions
- Feels and acts like a victim
- Judgmental of self and others
- Puts self down , shameful ,blaming, self critical ,condemning
- Negative attitude
- Triangulates by talking badly about one person to another
- Rationalizes
- Jealous/envious of others, has trouble being genuinely happy for the success of others
- Perfectionist
- Dependencies/addiction , compulsive, self defeating thinking and behavior
- Does not like the work one does
- Focuses on what doesn’t get done instead of what does
- Leaves tasks and relationship unfinished and walks away without resolving issues
- Judges self worth by comparing to others , feel inferior
- Does not accept or give compliments
- Is not comfortable with self , hard to be alone with self
- Avoids new endeavors ,fears mistakes or failures
- Irrational response ruled by emotions
- Lack of purpose in life
- Lack of defined goals
- Feels adequate to handle new situations , easily unstressed
- Feel resentful when doesn’t win
- Vulnerable to opinions , comments and attitude of others
- Continues to blame past experience (or family) in stead of dealing with current self (the past is the explanation , not an excuse)

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were:

- To identify the symptoms of shyness.
- To explore the causes of shyness.
- To find out the relationship of shyness with the self-esteem of students.
- To examine the effects of shyness on the self-esteem of 9th grade female students.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The following two hypotheses were formulated:

H1 The higher the level of shyness, the lower will be the self-esteem of students.

H0 Shyness does not always have the same effects on the self-esteem of every student.

Methodology

The research approach was quantitative. Two standardized questionnaires were used to collect data for the research. Shyness scale developed by Dr. M. Vanaja, Ms. N. Sneha Latha & Dr. Digumarti Bhaskar Rao in 1998 was used to assess students' shyness. The questionnaire was consisted of 25 items. Self-esteem scale developed by Rosenberg in 1965 had been used to collect data. Self-esteem questionnaire consisted of 10 items comprising different aspects of self-esteem. A total number of (150) one fifty 9th grade female students from five F.G Schools of Rawalpindi were selected as sample.

Procedure of the Study

The researcher herself visited each school for data collection and personally met the class teachers of grade 9th. The researcher briefed the teachers about the purpose of the research. When the teachers identified shy students, a careful observation was made by the researcher also and only those students were selected who were seemed to be really shy.

Results & Findings

The data collected through questionnaires was analyzed through SPSS (Statistical Package of Social Sciences). The correlation of the both the shyness scale and self-esteem scale was found significant. The results were interpreted in the forms of tables and graphs. Correlation was used to check the relationship between shyness and self-esteem, whether the relationship is positive or negative. From the correlation it was notified that weak positive relation existed between shyness and self-esteem as shown in table 1. Pearson correlation was used to find out the associations between shyness and self-esteem of students. The above table shows that the correlation between the two variables is $r = .500$. Hence it revealed that there was a weak positive relationship between shyness and self-esteem. In order to confirm the relationship mean and standard deviation of the both the scales were also administered. Further the data revealed that low scores showed high level of shyness and low self-esteem of the respondents as indicated in table 2.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion was made in the light of the results and discussion that shyness affects the self-esteem of students. The results of the questionnaire and feedback of the students supported the assumptions that higher the level of shyness lower will be the self-esteem of students and shyness does not always have the same effects on the self-esteem of every student. Shyness when combined with low self-esteem makes a student introvert in negative way. Life becomes miserable as the child cannot express her views openly. She becomes too much conscious and starts blaming others for mistakes. Students become pessimistic and always concentrate on failures. Basically the current study focused on the causes, effects and treatment of how shyness can be overcome and self-esteem could be improved. Findings of the research also provided a significant relationship between both the variables. Motivation and encouragement can overcome shyness and low self-esteem. To conclude the study it can be stated that shyness had effects on the self esteem of 9th grade female students.

Recommendations

- The students should talk to parents, friends, a mentor or anybody they trust most and should confide and express what they feel.
- The students should avoid doing so many things at the same time. Because this could lead them to confusion and frustration if nothing gets accomplished. They must stick on one thing that they are good at.
- Parents should teach their children how to behave in a social situation.
- Parents should try to be good role models. They must let their children see those making social contacts, expressing themselves and interacting with others.
- Parents should help their children to feel themselves important, capable and adequate. Such feelings will enhance their self-esteem.
- Teachers should avoid calling their students shy. If labeling occurs in the classroom, teachers should intervene.
- Teachers should encourage shy students to participate actively in classroom activities

References

- Byrnes, A. D. (1984). Forgotten children in classrooms: Development and Characteristics. *The elementary school journal*, Vol.84, No.3 [Online] Available: <http://www.JSTOR.com> (April 15 2011)
- Cheek, J. M., & Mechoir, L. A. (1990). Shyness, self-esteem and self-consciousness. In H. Leitenberg (Ed), *Handbook of social and evaluation anxiety*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Crozier, W. R. (2002). *Shyness: Development, Consolidation and Change*. London: Routledge Publishers.
- Dupper, D. R. (2002). *School Social Work*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley Sons Publication.
- Henderson, L., & Zimbardo, P. G. (1996). *Encyclopedia of Mental Health*. (vol. 3, pp. 497 - 509). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Honig, A. S. (1987). The Shy Child. *Young Children: International journal of social Psychiatry*. American Psychology Association, Vol.42 (4). Routledge Publishers.
- Johnson, S. L. (2004). *Therapist Guide to Clinical Intervention*. Academic Press.
- Malouff, J. (2008). *Helping Young Children Overcome Shyness*. New south Wales, Australia: Armidale.
- Murray, B. S., & John, W. R. (2000). *Triumph Over Shyness*. McGraw Professional Publishers.
- Reece, B. L., & Brandt, R. (2005). *Effective Human Relations: Personal and Organizational Applications*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Zimbardo, P. G., & Radl, S. L. (1981). *The Shy Child: a Parent's Guide to Preventing and Overcoming Shyness from Infancy to Adulthood*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Zolton, K & Long, N. (1997). *Shyness*. University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Artwork, [Online] Available: [http:// www.parenting-ed.org](http://www.parenting-ed.org) (May 2, 2011)

Table 1 Pearson Correlation between STS and SETS (N=150)

	STS	
	r	p
SETS	.500	.002

Table 2 Mean and standard deviation of the shyness and self-esteem scales.

Scales	Mean	Standard Deviation
Shyness Scale (STS)	53.92	6.803
Self-Esteem Scale (SETS)	56.60	8.594