

# Sponsored Teachers' Training College, Purulia

Sem.-IV, C-1.4.EPC04, Unit-V

## Study Material

Topic: Self-Esteem

### 1. Self-Esteem: Meaning & Concept

**James, (1890)** was the first to explain the term Self-Esteem as a psychological construct. He defined self-esteem as a sense of self-worth that arises from the relationship between what we can do and what we want to be able to do. What we like to do is relative to our values and our goals. Self-esteem has also been explained as a psychosocial construct.

It is a person's perception, judgment or value of their own abilities and qualities. Alternatively, in other words, self-esteem can be described as a person's emotional evaluation and perception of themselves. It involves beliefs about one's own appearance, beliefs about one's emotions, and self-reports of behaviour. Thus, our self-esteem develops throughout our lives based on life experiences and is tied to what we value as success. Individuals develop high self-esteem if their past or previous life experiences are positive.

However, a person's self-esteem is formed not only on the basis of his/her experiences; he takes into account the attitudes of others towards him. For this reason, self-esteem is often considered a measure of self-concept.

In the mid-1960s, a prominent sociologist, **Morris Rosenberg**, defined self-esteem as a person's "diminished self-esteem". He then developed a scale called the **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)** to measure a person's self-esteem, which is widely used in various studies in sociology. Self-esteem describes a person's overall sense of self-worth and is often considered a personality trait that tends to be stable or enduring.

Our level of self-esteem can make a difference (**Mruk, 1999**). High self-esteem is associated with successful coping with life events, positive emotions, self-control, and the ability to accept criticism and deal with stress without being overly critical of one or to others. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, is associated with poor adaptation and a variety of cognitive problems,

such as depression, anxiety, addiction, eating disorders, relationship difficulties, poor management of stress and compromised immune function.

### 1.1 Definitions:

- **According to Adler & Stewart (2004)** - Self-esteem refers to a person's overall sense of his or her value or worth. It can be considered a sort of measure of how much a person "values, approves of, appreciates, prizes, or likes him or herself".
- **According to Morris Rosenberg (1965)** - Self-Esteem is quite simply one's attitude toward oneself. He described it as a "favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the self".
- **According to Ellis (1994)** - Self-esteem is based on evaluating the self and rating one's behaviors and qualities as positive or negative, which results in defining the self as worthy or non-worthy.

### 1.2 Types of Self-Esteem

A prominent psychologist **Martin Ross** has been classified the term self-esteem into three parts: (i) People with broken Self-Esteem, (ii) People with shaky Self-Esteem, and (iii) People with Strong or Confident Self-Esteem.

**(i) People with Broken Self-Esteem** – This type of person think they don't deserve respect or love. They blame themselves for failure, despair, discomfort, etc. when they are unable to perform tasks. This type of person is very shy. As a result, they feel incompetent and unworthy.

**(ii) People with Shaky Self-Esteem** – This type of person have positive self-esteem but is more willing to take fewer risks. For example, images of failure, shame, disgrace, etc. Make their self-esteem less secure. In most cases, they resort to nervousness and defensive tactics. They advise to make a decision. Often, blaming others is maintaining one's own dignity. They don't play any other game for fear of losing.

**(iii) People with Strong or Confident Self-Esteem** – They have positive self-esteem and are reasonably strong mentally. Therefore, their self-esteem is not affected by fear of failure, failure, shame, discomfort, etc. They are less afraid of failure. They are not easily nervous and do not sell themselves unnecessarily. They do their best to achieve their goals. They are sensitive to

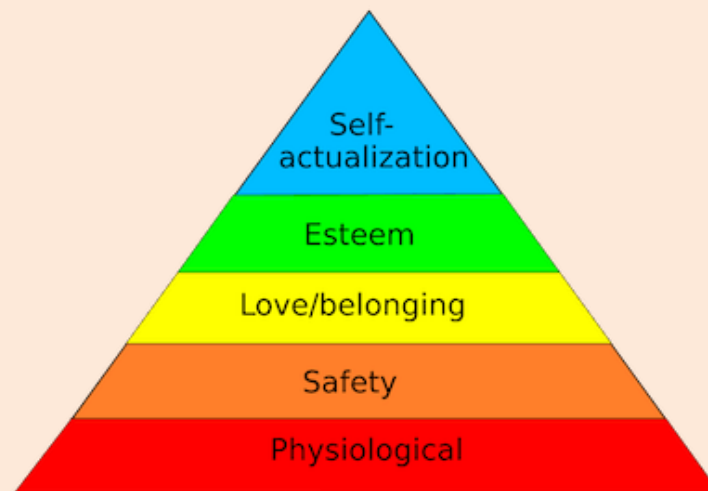
the emotions and needs of others. These types of people always take an active role in solving problems.

### 1.3 Factors influencing Self-Esteem:

Various factors believed to influence our self-esteem include:

- Genetics
- Personality
- Life experiences
- Age
- Health
- Thoughts
- Social circumstances
- The reactions of others
- Comparing the self to others

### 1.4 Self-Esteem in Maslow's Theory – The Hierarchy of Needs



The mention of esteem may bring to mind the fourth level of Maslow's pyramid: esteem needs.

While these needs and the concept of self-esteem are certainly related, Maslow's esteem needs are more focused on external measures of esteem, such as respect, status, recognition,

accomplishment, and prestige (McLeod, 2017). There is a component of self-esteem within this level of the hierarchy, but Maslow felt that the esteem of others was more important for development and need fulfillment than self-esteem.

He explained that for one to achieve self-actualization and grow, their need for inner-respect and esteem from others must be met.

### **1.5 People with high Self-Esteem have following characteristics: -**

- Appreciate themselves and other people.
- Enjoy growing as a person and finding fulfillment and meaning in their lives.
- Are able to dig deep within themselves and be creative.
- Make their own decisions and conform to what others tell them to be and do only when they agree.
- See the world in realistic terms, accepting other people the way they are while pushing them toward greater confidence and a more positive direction.
- Can easily concentrate on solving problems in their lives.
- Have loving and respectful relationships.
- Know what their values are and live their lives accordingly.
- Speak up and tell others their opinions, calmly and kindly, and share their wants and needs with others.
- Endeavor to make a constructive difference in other people's lives (Smith & Harte, n.d.).
- Act assertively without experiencing any guilt, and feel at ease communicating with others.
- Avoid dwelling on the past and focus on the present moment.
- Believe you are equal to everyone else, no better and no worse.
- Reject the attempts of others to manipulate you.
- Recognize and accept a wide range of feelings, both positive and negative, and share them within your healthy relationships.
- Enjoy a healthy balance of work, play, and relaxation.

- Accept challenges and take risks in order to grow, and learn from your mistakes when you fail.
- Handle criticism without taking it personally, with the knowledge that you are learning and growing and that your worth is not dependent on the opinions of others.
- Value yourself and communicate well with others, without fear of expressing your likes, dislikes, and feelings.
- Value others and accept them as they are without trying to change them.

#### **1.6 People with high Low-Esteem have following characteristics: -**

- Is extremely critical of themselves
- Downplays or ignores their positive qualities
- Judges themselves to be inferior to their peers
- Uses negative words to describe themselves such as stupid, fat, ugly or unlovable
- Has discussions with themselves (this is called 'self talk') that are always negative, critical and self blaming
- Assumes that luck plays a large role in all their achievements and doesn't take the credit for them
- Blames themselves when things go wrong instead of taking into account other things over which they have no control such as the actions of other people or economic forces
- Doesn't believe a person who compliments them.

#### **1.7 Causes of low Self-Esteem**

Some of the many causes of low self-esteem may include:

- Unhappy childhood where parents (or other significant people such as teachers) were extremely critical
- Poor academic performance in school resulting in a lack of confidence
- Ongoing stressful life event such as relationship breakdown or financial trouble
- Poor treatment from a partner, parent or career, for example, being in an abusive relationship
- Ongoing medical problem such as chronic pain, serious illness or physical disability
- Mental illness such as an anxiety disorder or depression.

## 1.8 Effect of Low Self-Esteem in Person's life

A low self-esteem can reduce the quality of a person's life in many different ways, including: -

- **Negative feelings** – The constant Self-Criticism can lead to persistent feelings of sadness, depression, anxiety, anger, shame or guilt.
- **Relationship problems** – for example they may tolerate all sorts of unreasonable behaviour from partners because they believe they must earn love and friendship, cannot be loved or are not loveable. Alternatively, a person with low self-esteem may feel angry and bully other people.
- **Fear of trying** – The person may doubt their abilities or worth and avoid challenges.
- **Perfectionism** – A person may push themselves and become an over-achiever to 'atone' for what they see as their inferiority.
- **Fear of judgements** – They may avoid activities that involve other people, like sports or social events; because they are afraid they will be negatively judged. The person feels self-conscious and stressed around others and constantly looks for 'signs' that people don't like them.
- **Low resilience** – A person with low self-esteem finds it hard to cope with a challenging life event because they already believe themselves to be 'hopeless'.
- **Lack of self-care** – The person may care so little that they neglect or abuse themselves, for example, drinks too much alcohol.
- **Self-Harming behaviours** – Low self-esteem puts the person at increased risk of self-harm, for example, eating disorder, drug abuse or suicide.

## 1.9 Importance of Self-Esteem

- Become yourself
- Acceptance of different opinion
- Ability to express coherent opinions
- Dealing with new situation
- Being fearless in uncertainty
- Much more resilient
- Not blind to recognition or praise

- Not need to know everything
- Make yourself accountable
- Ignoring absolute flawlessness
- Forming an attitude of accepting the faults of others
- Moving forward on the path to self-fulfillment
- Prevention of abnormal behavior
- Sense of life & self-motivation

### 1.10 Key's to increasing Self-Esteem in a person's Life

- **Talk to himself positively** – Need to treat person himself as he would his/her best friend. Be supportive, kind and understanding. Don't be hard on yourself when you make a mistake.
- **Challenge negative 'Self-Talk'** – every time you criticise yourself, stop and look for objective evidence that the criticism is true. (If you feel you can't be objective, then ask a trusted friend for their opinion.) Person need to realize that most of the negative self-talk is unfounded.
- **Don't compare with others** – recognize that everyone is different and that every human life has value in its own right. Make an effort to accept yourself, warts and all.
- **Acknowledge the positive vibrant himself** – for example, don't brush off compliments, dismiss the achievements as 'dumb luck' or ignore the positive traits himself.
- **Appreciate and list down the special qualities** – remind himself of a person's good points every day. Write a list and refer to it often. (If a person feels that he can't think of anything good about himself, ask a trusted friend to help him write the list.)
- **Forget the past** – concentrate on living in the here-and-now rather than reliving old hurts and disappointments.
- **Tell him a positive message everyday** – buy a set of 'inspirational cards' and start each day reading out a new card and carrying the card's message with own all day.
- **Stop upsetting** – 'upset or worry' is simply fretting about the future. Accept that you can't see or change the future and try to keep your thoughts in the here-and-now.
- **Have funs** – schedule enjoyable events and activities into every week.

- **Yoga & Exercise** – it is such a good boost to the brain for all kinds of things but especially in combating depression and helps to person to feel good. Targets need to be step by step, such as starting with a walk round the block once a day, enrolling at yoga, local gym class or going for a swim.
- **Be confident** – communicate your needs, wants, feelings, beliefs and opinions to others in a direct and honest manner.
- **Practise the above suggestions every day** – it takes effort and vigilance to replace unhelpful thoughts and behaviours with healthier versions. Need to give person's himself time to establish the new habits. Keep a diary or journal to chart progress in life.

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