Self-Efficacy in Adolescence: Theoretical Perspective

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Abstract

Among all the thoughts that affect human functioning, and standing at the core of psychologist Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory, are self-efficacy beliefs, the judgments that individuals make about their capability to accomplish tasks and succeed in activities. Self-efficacy beliefs touch virtually every aspect of people's lives— whether they think productively or self- actions that can stop a person from reaching the goal; how well they motivate themselves and persevere in the face of adversities; their vulnerability to stress and depression; and the life choices they make. People with a strong sense of efficacy approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. They have greater intrinsic interest and deep engrossment in activities, and they set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. High self-efficacy also helps create feelings of serenity in approaching difficult tasks and activities. As a consequence, self-efficacy beliefs powerfully influence the level of accomplishment that one ultimately achieves.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Self regulatory competency, Vulnerability, Engrossment.

Introduction

Adolescent period is full of anxiety, frustration, worries, complexes and conflicts. It is needed to help the student to understand their problems and does our best to help them in difficulties. At this stage student has to make beneficial decision by making their abilities. Student's capabilities like physical, mental, emotional and intellectual are very high and it depends on a student that how will he/she use these abilities to understand herself/ himself. Self – efficacy means how better a person will act in challenging situation and make purpose full decisions. A person self – efficacy is a strong determinant of their effort, determination; strategizing as well as their performance (Heslin&klehe, 2006). Self- efficacy is the extent or strength of one's belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and to reach the goals. Psychologists have studied self – efficacy from several perspectives, noting various paths in the development of self – efficacy; the dynamics of self – efficacy, and lack thereof, in many different settings; interactions between self – efficacy and self – concept; and habits of attribution that contribute to, or detract from self – efficacy.

Self – efficacy affects every area of human endeavor. By determining the beliefs a person holds regarding his or her power to affect situations, it strongly influences both the power of a person actually has to face challenges competently and the choices of a person is most likely to make. Judge et al. (2002) argued the concepts of locus of control, neuroticism, generalized self – efficacy and self – esteem measured the same, single factor and

demonstrated them to be related concept. Two decades have now passed since Bandura (1977) first introduced the construct of self-efficacy with the seminal publication of "Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change." A decade later, Bandura (1986) situated the construct within a social cognitive theory of human behavior that diverged from the prevalent cognitivism of the day and embedded cognitive development within a socio structural network of influences. More recently, Bandura (1997) published Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control, in which he further situated self-efficacy within a theory of personal and collective agency that operates in concert with other socio cognitive factors in regulating human well-being and attainment. In this volume, Bandura also addressed the major facets of agency -- the nature and structure of self-efficacy beliefs, their origins and effects, the processes through which such self-beliefs operate, and the modes by which they can be created and strengthened. In addition, Bandura reviewed a vast body of research on each of these aspects of agency in diverse applications of the theory.

Social cognitive theory

Psychologist Albert Bandura has defined self – efficacy as one's ability to succeed in specific situation or accomplish a task. One's sense of self – efficacy can play a major role in how one approaches goals, tasks and challenges. The theory of self- efficacy lies at the center of Bandura's social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the role of observational learning and social experience in the development of personality. The main concept in social cognitive theory is that an individual's actions and reactions, including social behaviors and cognitive processes, in almost every situation are influenced by the actions that individual has observed in others. Because self – efficacy is developed from external experience and self – perception and is influential in determining the outcome of many events, it is an important aspect of social cognitive theory. Self – efficacy represents the personal perception of external social factors. According to Bandura's theory, people with high self – efficacy that is, those who believe they can perform well-are more likely to view difficult tasks as something to be mastered rather than something to be avoided.

Social learning theory

Social learning theory describes the acquisition of skills that are developed exclusively or primarily within a social group. Social learning depends on how individuals either succeed or fail at dynamic experience interactions within groups, and promotes the development of individual emotional and practical skills as well as accurate perception of self and acceptance of others. According to this theory, people learn from one another through observation, limitation, and modeling. Self – efficacy reflects an individual understands of what skills he/ she can offer in a group setting.

Self – concept theory

Self – concept theory seeks to explain how people perceive and interpret their own existence from clues they receive from external sources, focusing on how these impressions are organized and how they are active

throughout life. Successes and failures are closely related to the ways in which people have learned to view themselves and their relationship with others. This theory describes self – concept (i.e., not present at birth) as learned ; organized (in the way it applied to the self) and dynamic (i.e., ever changing, and not fixed at a certain age).

Attribution theory

Attribution theory focuses on how people attribute events and how those beliefs interact with self – perception. Attribution theory defines three major elements of causes:

1. Locus: It is the location of perceived cause. If the locus is internal feelings of self – esteem and self – efficacy will be enhanced by success and diminished by failure.

2. Stability: It describes whether the cause is perceived as static or dynamic over time. It is closely related to expectations and goals, in that when people attribute their failures to stable factors such as the difficulty of a take, they will expect to fail in that task in the future.

3. Controllability: Controllability describes whether a person feels actively in control of the cause. Failing at a task one thinks one cannot control, can lead to feelings of humiliation, shame, and/or anger.

 A person who has established a strong sense of his or her own efficacy will tend to set higher goals and stick with them through greater difficulties. As a result, this person will more readily accept challenges to perform without feeling threatened. People with low self-efficacy may believe that things are tougher than they really are. When attempting a task a person with a low self-efficacy may experience stress, depression, and a narrow vision of the best way to solve problems. Low self-efficacy might also be able to explain why some individuals are unsuccessful or unwilling to complete a task even though they possess the necessary skills. According to Bandura, an individual's perceived self-efficacy is a stronger predictor of future behavior than performance attainment. Consequently, a student with high intellectual ability may perform poorly due to an inability to control feelings of failure.

Directions of Self Efficacy in research

Self-efficacy beliefs have also received increasing attention in educational research, primarily in studies of academic motivation and of self-regulation (Pintrich & Schunk, 1995). In this field self-efficacy researchers have focused on three areas. Researchers in the first area have explored the link between efficacy beliefs and college major and career choices, particularly in science and mathematics (see Lent & Hackett, 1987, for a review). This field of inquiry has important implications for counseling and vocational theory and practice, given that findings have provided insights into the career development of adolescent male and female and can be used to develop career intervention strategies. Findings from the second area suggest that the efficacy beliefs of teachers are

related to their instructional practices and to various student outcomes (Ashton & Webb, 1986). In the third area, researchers have reported that students' self-efficacy beliefs are correlated with other motivation constructs and with students' academic performances and achievement. Constructs in these studies have included attributions, goal setting, modeling, problem solving, test and domain-specific anxiety, reward contingencies, self-regulation, social comparisons, strategy training, other self-beliefs and expectancy constructs, and varied academic performances across domains.

Benefits of Self Efficacy

Self-efficacy's broad application across various domains of behavior has accounted for its popularity in contemporary research .There are many potential benefits regarding the attainment of self-efficacy in the pursuit of an education. The self-efficacy that young people are experiencing due to the effects of current educational environments is more than ever, their key to success as adults. In the future, cognitive and self-regulatory competencies will be necessary to fulfill complex occupational roles and manage the demands of a technologically changing world. Lifelong learners need self-efficacy beliefs in their abilities to control their level of educational attainment, to set high yet realistic goals for themselves and to persevere in times of difficulty.

Those with lower efficacy for academic achievement demonstrate less popularity within their educational cohorts, experience more rejection from peers, display tendencies toward aggressive behavior and tend to miss out on activities and experiences which promote success as adults. These inclinations strongly predict aggressive lifestyle attributes and involvement in antisocial activities as both adolescence and adults.

Implication for educators and students in school

The research conducted on self-efficacy has important implications for educators, school based programs and school psychologists. Within the classrooms school psychologists can instruct teachers on how to incorporate self-regulating strategies that are then used to obtain goals. While reviewing student work, teachers can offer feedback and positive reinforcement when using self-regulation strategies. The application of such factors will enable students to observe mastery, experience a sense of personal control and effectively monitor progress, which in turn will improve self-efficacy. Goal setting, progress feedback, and self-regulation are also important instructional techniques that can be implemented within the classroom to develop self-efficacy. As a school psychologist, in-services can be held and school based programs can be adopted on how to foster motivation and self-efficacy within the classrooms. At that meeting, a school psychologist or teacher could encourage the use of collaborative work situations within the classroom that provide students with observational experiences of similar peers. The observation of similar peers has been proven to increase self-efficacy and skill development.

From the above discussion we can say that self-efficacy is a powerful human characteristic with far-reaching influences for learning, motivation, career strategies and many aspects that correlate to success in life. It is

important for a educator or psychologist to remember that performance goals and test scores are often temporary when considering a child's educational career. Creating motivated students and positive self-efficacy beliefs is a lasting accomplishment that will set students on a path to lifelong learning.

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