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## ENHANCEMENT OF SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-ESTEEM IN REJECTED CHILDREN THROUGH POSITIVE THERAPY

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### *Abstract*

*The present study was undertaken to explore the effectiveness of a therapeutic intervention using Positive Therapy in rejected children. The sample consisted of 38 rejected children. Self-Concept and self-esteem of the sample was evaluated with Self-Concept Rating Scale by Dr. Hemalatha Natesan (1990) and Self-Esteem Scale by Dr. Florence Rosenberg (1965). 't' test was used to analyze the data. The result of the study indicated an enhancement in self-concept and self-esteem in rejected children after the intervention.*

### **Introduction**

Authentic definitions of 'Self-concept' and 'Self-esteem' are presented below:

"Self-concept or Self-identity is the mental and conceptual awareness and persistent regard that sentient beings hold with regard to themselves. Self-concept is organized. Self-concept has a generally stable quality that is characterized by orderliness and harmony. Each person maintains

countless perceptions regarding one's personal existence and each perception is orchestrated with all others. It is this generally stable and organized quality of self-concept that gives consistency to the personality". (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2003).

"Self-concept is complex and it consists of many different parts, including the knowledge of our own traits and beliefs, understanding of how we are

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perceived by and relate to others and knowledge of how we are similar to and different from others” (Baron, 2000).

“Self-concept is a person’s total internal view of self in relation to the experience of being and functioning within the environment. It includes value attached to such a view” (Gilliland, 1998).

“An individual’s self-esteem however is something more fundamental than the normal “ups and downs” associated with situational changes. For people with good basic self-esteem, normal “ups and downs” may lead to temporary fluctuations in how they feel about themselves, but only to a limited extent. In contrast, for people with poor basic self-esteem, these “ups and downs” may make all the difference in the world” (Fanning, 2000).

People with poor self-esteem often rely on how they are doing in the present, to determine how they feel about themselves. They need positive external experiences to counteract the negative feelings and thoughts that constantly plague them. Even then, the good feeling can be temporary. Healthy self-esteem is based on our ability to assess ourselves accurately and still be able to accept and to value ourselves unconditionally. This

means being able to realistically acknowledge our strengths and limitations and at the same time accepting ourselves as worthy and worthwhile without conditions or reservations (David, 1999).

Rejection or neglect is a failure to provide for an individual’s basic needs. (Mental Wellness Centre, 2005). Rejection creates a feeling of being unwanted which then reduces self-esteem. The more intimate the relationship in which rejection is experienced, the greater the damage done and the more challenging it can be to overcome the effects. Rejection contributes nothing to a relationship except to absolve the person from blaming any responsibility and to engage in problem solving (Arene, 2004).

Children every child needs a specific form of positive response and acceptance from parents and other primary caregivers. When this need is not met satisfactorily, children – regardless of age, culture and gender tend to report hostility and aggressiveness and most commonly they have impaired self-esteem and self-adequacy and will have a negative worldview (Cournoyer, 2001).

Rejected children are unhappy, poorly achieving children with a low sense of self-esteem.

Rejection is also associated with poor school performance, antisocial behaviour and delinquency in young adulthood. Rejected children are also very passive and they have low social and physical self-concepts (Macklem, 2000).

Hence the present study was undertaken to examine the enhancement of self-concept and self-esteem in rejected children through Positive Therapy.

### **Objectives**

The study had the following objectives:

- To assess the negative traits of the rejected children.
- To assess the level of self-concept of the sample.
- To assess the level of self-esteem of the sample.
- To help the sample enhance their self-concept through Positive Therapy.
- To help the sample enhance their self-esteem through Positive Therapy.

### **Methods**

#### **Sample**

Thirty-eight female children between the age range of 14 and 18 years were selected as the sample. Purposive sampling method was used to select the sample for this research.

### **Tools Used**

Case Study Schedule prepared by the researcher was used to collect the information regarding the personal data of the sample.

Self-Concept Rating Scale (1990) constructed and standardized by Dr. Hemalatha Natesan was used to assess the level of self-concept of the sample. Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, constructed and standardized by Dr. Florence Rosenberg (1965) was used to assess the level of self-esteem of the sample.

### **Procedure**

From Kovai Seva Nilayam, Coimbatore, 38 female children were selected out of 70 by Purposive Sampling. They were in the age range of 14 to 18 years. To begin with, rapport was established with all the subjects. Then the Case Study Schedule, Self-concept Rating Scale and Self-esteem Scale were administered on the entire sample (N=70). Out of the 70 students, 38 subjects with low Self-concept and low Self-esteem were selected as the sample for the action research. The subjects were given the psychological intervention called Positive Therapy.

### **Treatment**

Positive Therapy helps the person to lead a healthy, happy and

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successful life. Positive Therapy has 4 main strategies. They are:

- Relaxation Therapy
- Counselling
- Exercises
- Behavioural Assignments

Relaxation training was given to the sample to ensure a calm and relaxed state. Counselling was given to the subjects who had problems like low self-confidence, inferiority, pessimism etc. Exercises like Tension Releasing Exercise, Smile Therapy and Laugh Therapy were given to the sample. In Behavioural Assignments, the clients were instructed to have a daily routine like thinking positively, living in the present, sharing their feelings, enjoying music etc.

**Results**

The obtained data was analyzed, tabulated and discussed in terms of significance of difference 't', before and after treatment. The results revealed that negative emotions like worry (68%) and feelings of insecurity (66%) were found to be high among rejected children. There was a high prevalence rate of about 79 percent for low self-concept. Moderate self-esteem (58%) was found to be more prevalent among rejected

children and low self-esteem was found to be about 37 percent.

Table 1 shows that the negative traits such as worry (68%) and feelings of insecurity (66%) were found to be high among rejected children. According to Eric Erickson, first stage in psychosocial development is Trust and Mistrust. This stage highlights the importance of love and affection received by the children from their mothers. It is instrumental in developing trust in oneself and towards the world.

This will help the child in developing good self-concept and help in developing good social skills. However, individuals in the sample lack the support and love of their parents on account of rejection, which is seen from their scoring. As a result, rejected children tend to develop negative feelings.

*Table-1: Negative Traits of the  
Subjects (N=38)*

Negative Traits	Number	Percentage
Worry	26	68
Insecurity	25	66
Rigidity	18	47
Jealousy	17	45
Stubbornness	16	42
Selfishness	13	34
Hypersensitivity	12	32
Withdrawal	11	29
Inferiority	9	24
Indecisiveness	8	21

**Table-2: Significance of Difference between the Mean Self-concept of the Subjects before and after Treatment**

Treatment condition	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	t test
Before	38	2.11	0.38	17.1*
After	38	3.82	0.45	

Significant at 0.01 level

**Table-3: Significance of Difference between the Mean Self-esteem of the Subjects before and after Treatment**

Treatment condition	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	t test
Before	38	14.13	3.14	18.35*
After	38	27.89	3.37	

Significant at 0.01 level

The Mean self-concept of the sample is indicated in Table 2. The Mean self-concept of the group is 'low' (M=2.11), before the treatment. After treatment, the self-concept has increased to 'high' (M=3.82).

The Mean difference in self-concept before and after treatment was statistically significant at 0.01 level, which shows that the self-concept has increased after treatment. Children suffering from problems like lack of self-confidence, worries etc., were provided necessary guidance and help through counselling, which is an important component of Positive Therapy.

Table 3 shows that the Mean self-esteem of the subjects was 'low' (M=14.13) before treatment. After treatment, there

was an improvement in their Mean self-esteem showing a shift to 'high' (M=27.89). The Mean difference in the self-esteem before and after treatment was statistically significant at 0.01 level, which shows that self-esteem has increased after treatment. In Positive Therapy, Relaxation Training along with Autosuggestion helps the children to instill positive traits like courage and confidence.

Through autosuggestion, they were able to instill an optimistic view of themselves. Counselling strategies like Thought Stopping and Cognitive Restructuring helped the subjects to challenge the negative messages of the inner voice and motivated them to change these negative messages into positive ones. Positive Therapy helped the subjects in enhancing their self-esteem.

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## Discussion

The research findings of the present study show that rejected children experience low self-concept and low self-esteem, which is supported from the study conducted by Martig and Blassie (1999) which examined the Self-concept among the Indian children. The results of the study on 129 elementary schoolchildren using the 23-item Primary Self-concept Scale showed that Indian children, rejected by adults, had low self-concept which in turn produced low self-esteem and retarded school attainment.

## Conclusion

The present study on enhancement of self-concept and self-esteem of rejected children showed that rejected children suffered from low self-concept and low self-esteem. Positive Therapy was administered on the sample as a treatment module and the therapy has helped the subjects to enhance their self-concept and self-esteem.

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