

Chapter 9

Teachers' Self-Perception and Students' Self-Esteem: Nurturing Positive Educational Environments

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the reciprocal relationship between teachers' self-perception and students' self-esteem among 4th to 6th graders, examining how teachers' beliefs about their professional competence shape instructional strategies and classroom environments. The study revealed a moderate, positive association between teacher self-perception and student self-esteem, suggesting that teachers' confidence and self-efficacy can meaningfully influence students' emotional well-being. At the same time, factors such as family dynamics, peer relationships, and broader sociocultural contexts also play a role in shaping student outcomes. These findings highlight the importance of professional development programs that strengthen teachers' self-perception and instructional effectiveness, enhancing supportive learning environments and promoting students' socio-emotional growth.

INTRODUCTION

Student success is shaped not only by academic achievement but also by socio-emotional factors such as self-esteem, motivation, and emotional well-being.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-2449-4.ch009

Among the various influences on these outcomes, teachers' self-perception, the way educators view their competence, effectiveness, and professional identity, plays a critical yet often underexplored role. Teachers' beliefs about themselves affect their instructional strategies, classroom management, and interactions with students, which in turn shape students' emotional and academic development (Hattie, 2012; Klassen & Tze, 2014).

Teacher self-perception is closely related to self-efficacy, defined as individuals' beliefs in their capacity to execute tasks and achieve goals (Bandura, 1997). Educators with strong self-perception and high self-efficacy are more likely to adopt student-centred approaches, provide constructive feedback, and enhance a supportive learning environment (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). These practices contribute positively to students' self-esteem, defined as an individual's sense of self-worth and confidence (Rosenberg, 1965). However, teachers who doubt their abilities or feel professionally insecure may unintentionally transmit negative cues, hindering students' socio-emotional development (Rimm-Kaufman & Hamre, 2010).

Although the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and student outcomes has been well-documented, few studies have directly examined how teachers' self-perception influences students' self-esteem, particularly in culturally diverse or multilingual educational contexts. Understanding this link is crucial, as students often look to teachers for validation, guidance, and emotional support, especially during formative academic years. The present study addresses this gap by investigating the extent to which teachers' self-perception predicts students' self-esteem in grades 4 to 6, with attention to potential gender differences.

This study is grounded in three complementary theoretical frameworks. Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1997) emphasizes the role of belief in one's capabilities in shaping motivation and persistence. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) highlights how autonomy, competence, and relatedness support intrinsic motivation and emotional growth. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) highlights the influence of social interactions and teacher-student relationships on learning and identity formation. Together, these frameworks provide a multidimensional lens for exploring how teachers' internal beliefs shape classroom dynamics and students' self-concept.

To conceptualize self-esteem, this study draws on Lawrence's (2006) framework of self-concept, which differentiates self-concept, self-image, ideal self, and self-esteem. Teachers with a positive self-concept are more likely to model confidence, resilience, and reflection, which nurtures a supportive classroom environment and enhances students' self-esteem. However, teachers with fragile self-perception may inadvertently affect students' emotional security and learning motivation.

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