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Students' Self-Esteem at School: The Risk, the Challenge, and the Cure

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Abstrak

Sebagai salah satu elemen penting dalam kesejahteraan psikologis pelajar, self-esteem seringkali tidak mendapat perhatian khusus di sekolah. Di sekolah di mana pelajar dikelompokkan berdasarkan kemampuan akademik, guru cenderung memiliki pengharapan berbeda terhadap kelompok pelajar yang berbeda; terhadap pelajar berprestasi tinggi, guru cenderung memberikan dukungan akademik, sementara terhadap pelajar berprestasi kurang, guru cenderung berusaha mengendalikan perilaku pelajar agar terhindar dari masalah disiplin. Selanjutnya, pelajar secara tidak langsung akan mengamati perilaku guru di dalam kelas dan mengembangkan persepsi terhadap pengharapan guru (PTE), di mana pengaruhnya tidak selalu positif. Dengan kata lain, praktek pengelompokan pelajar memiliki pengaruh negative terhadap self-esteem pelajar. Karena hal tersebut, maka strategi untuk meningkatkan self-esteem pelajar seringkali tidak membuahkan hasil jangka panjang, karena pengharapan guru terhadap siswa akan selamanya dipengaruhi oleh atribut kelompok siswa tersebut (berprestasi kurang atau tinggi). Bagaimanapun juga, dewasa ini telah ditemukan bahwa locus of control (LoC) memiliki efek mediasi terhadap hubungan kausal antara PTE dan self-esteem. Berdasarkan pemahaman tersebut, terdapat harapan untuk mengembangkan atau memelihara self-esteem pelajar dengan cara mengembangkan berbagai strategi berdasarkan teori behavioural untuk mengubah LoC pelajar.

Kata kunci: *self-esteem, locus of control, modifikasi perilaku*

Abstract

As one of the most important elements in students' psychological well-being, self-esteem is often neglected at school. In schools where students are grouped based on their academic abilities, teachers are likely to have different expectancies toward different group of students; towards high-achieving students, they tend to be academically supportive, while towards low-achieving students, they tend to control students' behavior in order to avoid disciplinary problems. In turn, students observe their teachers' classroom behavior and develop different perception towards their teachers' expectancy. Eventually, self-esteem of the students is affected by their perceived teachers' expectancy (PTE), where the effect is not always positive. In other words, the practice of BCAG might contribute negative effect to students' self-esteem. Therefore, any strategy to improve students' self-esteem might not be able to produce long-lasting result, because teachers' expectancy towards the students is strongly influenced by the classroom segregation. However, it was discovered recently that locus of control (LoC) mediates the effect of PTE on students' self-esteem. In the light of that, there is a hope to develop or maintain students' self-esteem levels by developing some strategies based on behavior modification theories to alter students' LoC.

Keywords: *self-esteem, locus of control, behavior modification*

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Introduction

Although schools define many goals, academic success has always been the only goal regularly monitored and addressed as the only indicator for quality of school life (Slavin, 2006). However, students' psychological well-being is considered important to be addressed as a significant contributor of students' success in the future. Out of many elements, self-esteem plays an important role in determining students' psychological well-being; many researchers maintained that self-esteem is an important factor to be considered in education (Ferkany, 2008; Humphrey, 2004).

Overview of the Self-Esteem

The definition of self-esteem evolved through a long history. In 1890, William James defined self-esteem as an affective phenomenon and a dynamic process affected by successes and failures and thus opens to enhancement, or a comparison between ideal-self (the person I should be) and actual-self (the person I am now) (James, 1983). In 1963, Robert White saw self-esteem as a developmental phenomenon but it develops gradually being affected by and in turn effecting experience and behavior, it has two sources: an internal source (own accomplishments) and external source (affirmations from others).

Self-esteem as an attitude (either positive or negative) that individuals have about themselves, and that it is a product of the influences of culture, society, family and interpersonal relationships (Rosenberg, 1979). In 1967, Stanley Coopersmith described self-esteem as a construct or an acquired trait, that is, an individual learns how worthy they are initially from parents. In 1969, Nathaniel Branden explained self-esteem as a basic human need. Lack of it has serious negative consequences such as substance abuse, suicide, anxiety and depression. In 1973, Lawrence suggests that self-esteem is a result of a series of value judgments made by children as they grow up, in which they attempt to sort out ideas that they develop about their abilities, attributes and appearance. These they acquire by their perceptions of how they are accepted and valued by adults. Because of the interactions with significant adults and peers, children form impressions of the abilities and personal qualities that are admired and valued. Self-esteem, Lawrence suggests, is the total evaluation children make of themselves and the degree of respect in which they regard themselves. Self-esteem is thus conceptualized as global feelings and attitudes that children and adults have about themselves.

In general, self-esteem is an individual's evaluation of his/her self worth and also defined as the value each individuals place on own characteristics, abilities, and behavior (Von Der Haar, 2005). In all cases, self-esteem results from an evaluation of oneself (Larsen & Buss, 2008), and self-esteem measures of many areas are moderately correlated; a person with high self-esteem in one area also tends to have high self-esteem in the other areas as well. Self-esteem can also be defined as the integrated sum of self-worth and self-competence (Mruk, 2006). It means that students who possess positive self-esteem are those who feel confident about both their sense of self-worth ('I am good and deserve to obtain care and respect from my peers and teachers') and their sense of self-competence ('I am able to meet the present and future challenges I face in life').

Self-esteem has been considered important to individuals' life since decades ago. Coopersmith (1967) stated that self-esteem is a significant attribute for an individual, because it would influence ones' overt behavior. Individuals with adequate self-esteem simply feel that they are persons of worth; they respect themselves for what they are, but do not admire themselves nor do they expect others to admire them. Moreover, self-esteem is significantly correlated with individuals' responsibility; the taking of responsibility either for oneself or for others indicated the possession of enough personal confidence and self-security to enable an individual to take a responsibility role (Horrocks & Jackson, 1972).

Crocker and Park (2003) pointed out that self-esteem could actually drive people to seek success and avoid failure in ways that are harmless to themselves or to others. This statement underlined the importance of self-esteem in an individual's life in order to determine one's future. On the other hand, extremely high self-esteem, in some instances, was indicated as a good long-term predictor of suicidal tendencies (Martin, Richardson, Bergen, Roeger, & Allison, 2005). Therefore, it could be assumed that alteration of self-esteem to both directions, positive or negative, is a significant matter to be controlled in order to keep students from having inadequately positive or negative self-esteem.

The Importance of Self-Esteem at School

In school context, self-esteem is a central concept that is related to academic achievement, social functioning and psychopathology of children and adolescents (Bos, Muris, Mulkens, & Schaalma, 2006). Self-esteem is important to provide the required motivation in order to be academically successful (Branden, 1994; Cigman, 2004; Ferkany, 2008; Lawrence, 2006; van Laar, 2000), and facilitating students' self-esteem might be a part that supports the schools' academic goals, without making it as an educational priority (Ferkany, 2008). On the other hand, self-esteem can be seen as a construct that mediates between ability and achievement; self-esteem could influence subsequent achievement, and achievement could influence subsequent levels of self-esteem (Humphrey, 2004; Mruk, 2006). Thereby children with low self-esteem are less successful at school (Mann, Hosman, Schaalma, & De Vries, 2004).

With regard to social functioning, students with low self-esteem are usually less accepted by their peers (Donders & Verschueren, 2004). Furthermore, many studies have shown that low self-esteem is related to child psychopathology, including anxiety, depression and eating pathology (Beck, Brown, Steer, Kuyken, & Grisham, 2001; Muris, Meesters, & Fijen, 2003). In other words, students' self-esteem is an important attribute to be concerned related to academic achievements. Students with positive self-esteem would likely to be motivated to strive for higher academic achievements, and in turn, higher academic achievements would likely to boost their self-esteem. Students with inadequate self-esteem level are likely to have social or disciplinary problems as bad as delinquent behavior, while students with adequate self-esteem level are likely to behave appropriately, as well as having better self-evaluation and expectancy. Furthermore, it can be argued that self-esteem is vulnerable to social environment, which in school context is represented by teachers' expectancy.

How Self-Esteem Developed At School Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic interaction theories by Cooley (1912), Mead (1934), and Stryker (2002) stated that others' behavior would serve as a symbol that reflect their expectancy towards an individual, and the individual would use his or her perception on this symbol as a reference to evaluate themselves. Findings of a study by Davies and Brember (1999) supported the implication of the symbolic interaction theories in school settings. They found that feelings of worth or unworthiness, which came from others' feedback, could form an individuals' self-image forming, which in turn, affected their mathematics and reading. Dole and McMahan (2005) found that many students with learning and behavior problems have poor social skills and low self-esteem, because they were addressed as problematic students by their social environment.

In other words, teachers' expectancy towards the students might not influence them directly; instead, students would perceive their teachers' behavior as a symbolization of the teachers' expectancy; thereby, it is the Students' *perceived teachers' expectancy* (PTE) that influenced their self-evaluation. By explaining how students' self-evaluation is affected by their teachers' behavior, theories of symbolic interaction serves as a bridge to connect the students' PTE to students' self-esteem. Figure 1 explained how teachers' expectancy might indirectly affect students' self-esteem.

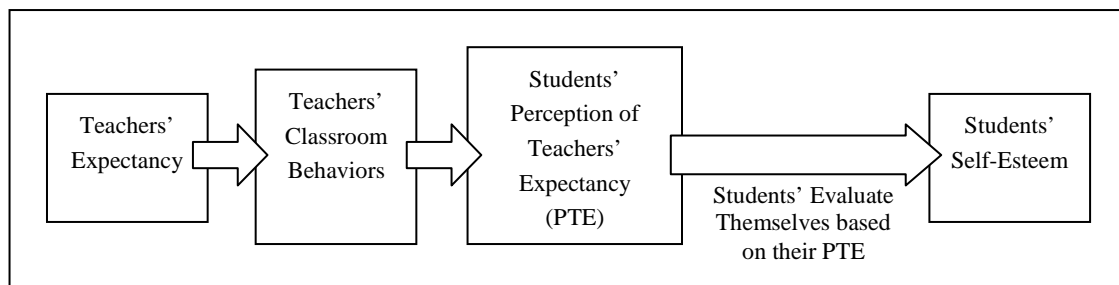


Figure 1. How Symbolic Interaction Theory Explain the Effect of Teachers' Expectancy on Students' Self-Esteem.

Supporting the perspective of Symbolic Interaction Theorists, Humphrey (2004) had argued that teachers and peers are extremely influential in the context of self-esteem; teachers strongly influence the self-esteem of their students because they are perceived as experts and authority figures, and because they are one of two primary sources of feedback about academic competence (the other being the child's peer group).

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Theory

Another theory that explains how teachers play significant role in determining students' self-esteem is the theory of Self-Fulfilling Prophecy (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968, 1992). The term self-fulfilling prophecy was coined by sociologist Robert Merton in 1948, which defined it as a belief that leads to its own fulfillment (Myers, 2008). In 1968, Merton redefined it as a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior, which makes the original false conception come 'true'. This specious validity of the self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuates a reign of error, because the prophecy-makers will cite the actual course of events as proof that he was right from the very beginning (Merton, 1968). For instance, when teachers set their expectancy that students from a particular classroom would achieve high, they would likely set their behavior to support the students to achieve high, so their 'prophecy' becomes reality.

Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson in 1968 reported a relationship between teacher's expectancy and students' academic achievements; the higher the teacher's expectancy, the higher the students' levels of academic achievements, but by Rosenthal's own count, in only about forty percent of the nearly 500 published experiments did expectancies significantly affect performance (Rosenthal, 2002). Low expectancies do not doom a capable child; neither do high expectancies transform a slow learner into a genius. Nevertheless, further analysis revealed the teacher-expectancies effect to be not as powerful and reliable as Rosenthal and Jacobson's experiment had led many people to believe. However, when teachers have obviously different expectancy towards HAC and LAC, it is not impossible for the teachers to set different learning environment for both groups in order to fulfill the expectancies.

In spite of the low percentage of the findings that support Rosenthal and Jacobson's theory about self-fulfilling prophecy, another study found that high expectancies do seem to boost low achievers (Slavin, 2006). Therefore, teachers' evaluations correlate with students' achievement, teachers think well of students who do well, that is mostly because teachers accurately perceive their students' abilities and achievements.

Teachers have higher expectancy for some students than for others; prior information about the students would be taken as the base of their expectancy (Myers, 2008). For example, if a teacher had an older sibling precede a student in a school, the teacher would likely to expect the student to have similar attribute with his or her older sibling, and the student would likely to show a confirming behavior to the teacher's expectancy (Myers, 2008). Teacher's expectancy can become self-fulfilling prophecies because it was supported by the teacher's overt behavior. However for the most part, teachers' expectancy accurately reflects reality (Jussim & Harber, 2005). The argument was illustrated in Figure 2.

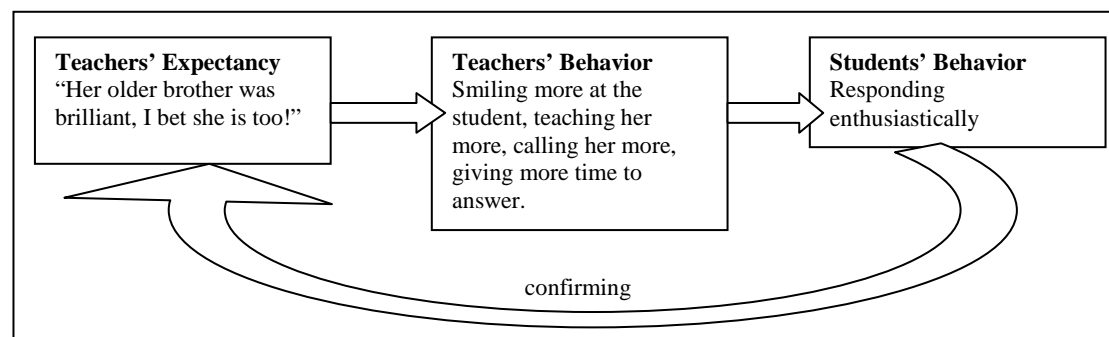


Figure 2. Flow of self-fulfilling prophecy on how teachers' expectancy is confirmed through their own behavior (Myers, 2008).

As seen in Figure 2, prior information increased teacher's expectancy, the expectancy influenced behavior, and the behavior was responded by the student with an appropriate behavior, which confirmed the teacher's expectancy (Jussim & Harber, 2005). In line with the previous statement, study of Myers (2008) noted that the prior information would determine the level of teacher's expectancy; they would likely to put higher expectancy towards certain high-achievers students and lower expectancy towards the others. These expectancy levels will influence the teacher's behavior towards the students. For example, the teacher would likely to give the high-achievers more chance to reply or to query compared to the low-achievers. Through the teacher's behavior, students might be able to perceive about the teachers' expectancy towards them (Myers, 2008).

Another finding that supported the existence of self-fulfilling prophecy at school was stated by Hung Siu Tong (2002), who has conducted a research for The University of Hongkong, aimed at pointing out the important role of teacher in grouped classrooms. The study explored the effect of grouping practice from the teachers' perspective: how teachers view their class of students and whether or not they have modified their methods of instruction. After interviewing 18 teachers, Tong concluded that the perspectives of the teachers gradually take shape and then reflected in their instruction and attitudes towards their students. Students then would perform as they were expected by their teachers. This qualitative study found an existence of the self-fulfillment prophecy phenomenon in the grouped classrooms.

Theory of symbolic interaction and self-fulfilling prophecy explained how teachers play their significant role in determining students' self-evaluation (self-esteem). Both theories indicated that students' self-esteem is affected by the way the students perceived their teachers' expectancy. They believe that their teachers' behavior represents the teachers' expectancy, and they evaluate themselves based on that particular expectancy. However, both theories also indicated teachers' actual expectancy does not predict students' self-evaluation; it is students' PTE that affect students' self-esteem. On the other hand, teachers' expectancy might not always be genuine, because certain policies of the school might lead the teachers to develop certain expectancy towards particular group of students. Especially when the students are grouped based on their previous academic reports.

Students' Grouping Practice And Teachers' Expectancy

In order to improve students' academic achievements, schools in some countries group their students based on their academic abilities (Gamoran, 2002; Hallam, Ireson, & Davies, 2002; Kulik, 2004; Saleh, Lazonder, & DeJong, 2005; Slavin, 1990). In some countries, public secondary schools are practicing Between Class Ability Grouping (BCAG), where they grouped students based on the previous academic reports, and the students remain in the same classrooms for every subject.

BCAG is considered effective in order to gain the maximum result of academic achievement out of the best students (Kulik, 2004). In the same study, Kulik argued that typical students in a non-grouped class might gain one year on a grade-equivalent scale in a calendar year, whereas the typical students in BCAG would gain 1.3 years; and the effects were positive for high, middle, and low groups in cross grade program. At the same time, he supported the practice of BCAG by arguing that the practice helps schools meet the varying needs of students; it provides low-performing students (LPS) with the attention and slower work pace, and high-performing students (HPS) to be sufficiently challenged by faster-paced, more-demanding lessons, and permits teachers to provide different materials for HPS and more support to LPS. In other words, LPS tend to receive lower-quality instruction, which covers less content, involves more drill and repetition, and places more emphasis on classroom management tasks (Secada, 1992).

Interviews with several secondary school teachers in two states of Malaysia indicated that they would rather to teach in a grouped class. Some of them mentioned that HPS are ready to move ahead and prepared to learn, while LPS require more time and attention in order to move between chapters in a subject. Therefore, according to those teachers, mixing HPS and LPS in one classroom might taxed both groups; the LPS might not be able to catch the pace of HPS, and the HPS might not be comfortable holding back their pace to tolerate their LPS counterparts.

However, it was stated that there is no positive or negative effect coming from between-class ability grouping programs without curricular adjustment (Slavin, 1990, 2006). Slavin stated that no research evidence supported the practice of BCAG at any grade level, therefore should be avoided whenever possible. Mixed-Ability classes, on the other hand, can be successful at all grade levels, particularly if other, more effective means of accommodating student differences are used. This include within-class ability grouping (mixing HPS and LPS in the same classroom, then group them within themselves), tutoring for low achievers, and certain individualized instruction programs that are

described in this chapter, as well as cooperative learning strategies (Slavin, 2006). Moreover, cooperative learning groups, in combination with preventative tutoring, within-class ability grouping, and other alternatives to BCAG, have been shown to result in higher achievement, little or no psychological harm, and less segregation (Slavin, 1987). In fact, within-class ability grouping, when it is closely related to the purposes of instruction and is applied flexibly - grouping and regrouping based on the needs and interests of students - can be beneficial for students of diverse ability (Secada, 1992).

In term of non-academic trait, Oakes (1985) stated that young adolescents are vulnerable as they struggle to establish a sense of their own identity; BCAG practice often creates negative perceptions of LPS that affect the students' self-perceptions. Furthermore, the practice of BCAG has a negative effect on LPS' motivation and opportunities to learn as well as on their life chances. It also perpetuates class and racial inequities (Oakes, 1985). In line with previous statements, Secada (1992) reported that while the practice benefits HPS, it has a detrimental effect on LPS; thus grouping practices - especially BCAG - often have the effect of reducing equity among students. Even though instruction may need to be delivered in different ways, students' psychological well-being (such as self-esteem) is also important to be enhanced and maintained.

Similarly, Saleh et al., (2005) reported views on different groups of students in BCAG-practicing schools. They stated that low-ability students achieve more and are more motivated to learn in heterogeneous groups; average-ability students perform better in homogeneous groups, whereas high-ability students show equally strong learning outcomes in homogeneous and heterogeneous groups. Furthermore, they found that results on social interaction indicate that heterogeneous groups produce higher proportions of individual elaborations, whereas homogeneous groups use relatively more collaborative elaborations. Thus, HPS are the only group that gets the benefit of the practice of BCAG. Low and average performing students are likely to perform better and affectively prefer to be in non-grouped classrooms.

It can be concluded that even though BCAG practice is favored by the teachers and some researchers due to its effectiveness in grooming the HPS to achieve higher, some negative aspects are highlighted by another group of researchers. Most of them indicated that BCAG tolls students' psychological well-being, where self-esteem is one of them. In the next subsection, the discussion is conducted around the theories and studies how students' self-esteem might be affected by the practice of BCAG.

Teachers' Expectancy and BCAG: Attribution Theory

Attribution theory pioneer Fritz Heider (1958) analyzed the 'commonsense psychology' by which people explain everyday events. He stated that sometimes, observers give attributes to someone else's behavior based on internal causes, like the person's disposition, and sometimes based on external causes like something about the person's situation (Heider, 1958). Figure 3 illustrates an example of how attribution became the base of one's reaction.

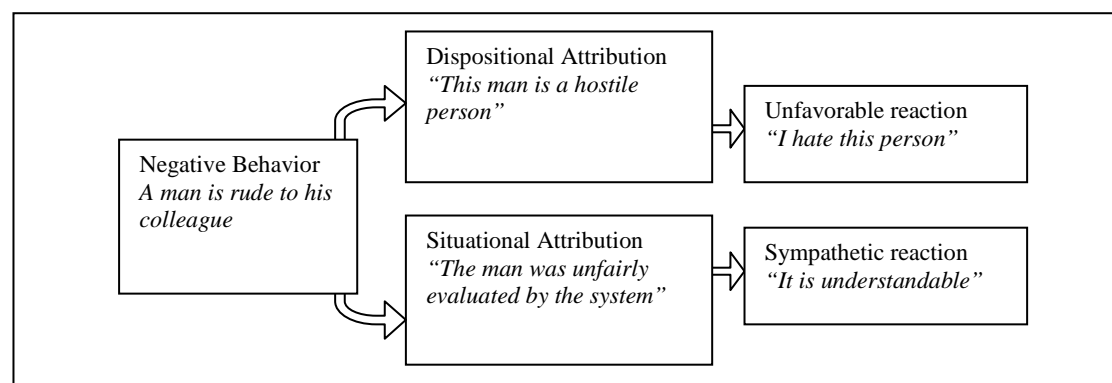


Figure 3. How a negative behavior determines an observer's feeling (adopted from Myers, 2008)

The attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Myers, 2008) can be used to explain the teachers' expectancy in the BCAG-practicing environment. As an addition to Heiders' theory, Ross (1977) addressed a term called correspondence bias (also called fundamental attribution error). It refers to the

tendency for observers to underestimate situational influences and overestimate dispositional influences upon others' behavior, or in other words, giving attribute to their observation objects based on the recent situation instead of the internal disposition the objects might have. The correspondence bias can also be seen as an evolving problem in social psychology, describes four mechanisms that elicit failures in attributing other people, namely lack of awareness, unrealistic expectations, inflated categorizations, and incomplete corrections (Gilbert & Malone, 1995). The nature of BCAG practice would divide students to several groups hierarchically, which the extreme ends of the hierarchy are considered as HPS and LPS. This grouping would give each student an attribute; HPS would be attributed as 'high-ability', while their LPS counterparts would be attributed as 'low-ability'. Thereby, referred to the theory of attribution, teachers would attribute students' based on their external causes, which is classroom placements. When the phenomenon of correspondence bias takes place, teachers would assume that the entire new batch of HPS is academically potential and the entire new batch of LPS has potential to be involved in disciplinary matters, even before the teachers come to the respective classrooms.

BCAG was practiced based on students previous academic achievement (Slavin, 2006; Hallam et al., 2002; Kulik, 2004), which is similar to the practices in most of the public secondary schools in some countries in Southeast Asia. In such environment, teachers who expected different behavioral outcomes from LPS and HPS before the process of teaching and learning takes place could be said to experience a correspondence bias. For instance, well-behaved students with incidentally low previous academic achievement (e.g., due to prior medical leave or family matters) would not be expected to behave appropriately just because they were assigned to the same classroom with LPS. Figure 4 illustrates how the theory of attribution (Heider, 1958; Myers, 2008) and the occurrence of correspondence bias stated by Ross (1977) explain some possibilities that teachers' behavior towards their students in BCAG-practicing environment would be based on their expectancy towards the students from each group.

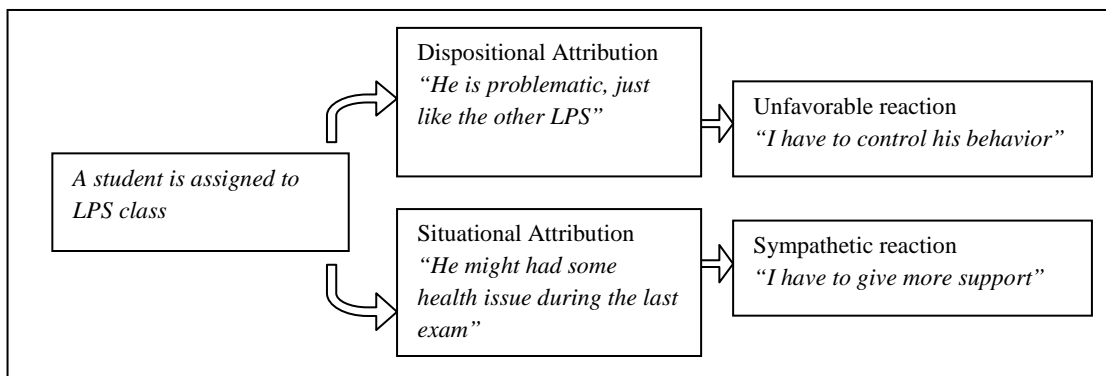


Figure 4. How a teacher might fall into correspondence bias based on the theory of attribution

Supporting the assumption depicted in Figure 4, a study was recently conducted in Malaysia over 153 HPS and 149 LPS, and it showed that students from different groups perceived their teachers' behavior in different ways (Hazri, Prihadi, & Hairul, 2010). They advocated that HPS perceived that their teachers are academically supportive while LPS perceived that their teachers are more into controlling students' behavior to avoid disciplinary problems. These findings indicated that teachers in the BCAG-practicing schools behave differently towards different groups of students, and it is supported by the discovery of different PTE among the students from other researchers (for example: Prihadi & Chin, 2011; Rubie-Davies, 2010).

SELF-ESTEEM DEVELOPMENT IN BCAG-PRACTICING ENVIRONMENT

Theoretical Perspective

The theory of attribution (Heider, 1958; Myers, 2008) explained how BCAG practice informed teachers about students' prior academic achievement by assigning the students into several particular classrooms for HPS and LPS. The same theory as well explained how correspondence bias might occur among teachers, and drove teachers to attribute students based on their class assignment (Ross, 1977).

The theory of self-fulfilling prophecy (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Merton, 1948) explained how teacher might behave differently towards different groups of students based on their false attribution due to correspondence bias. Symbolic interaction theory (Cooley, 1912; Blumer, 1962; Coopersmith, 1967; Myers, 2008) explained how students' perceived teachers' expectancy in the classrooms might predict the students' LoC preference and self-esteem levels.

The theory of attribution (originally stated by Heider in 1958 and redefined by Myers in 2008) explained how the practice of BCAG in public secondary schools might give labels to students as HPS or LPS, where the labels serve the teachers as students' attributes. Correspondence bias or fundamental attribution error, a phenomenon that was added to the theory by Ross (1977), might be occurred among teachers where they would likely to have different expectancy towards different groups of students.

The theory of self-fulfilling prophecy (originally stated by Merton in 1948 and redefined by Rosenthal and Jacobson in 1968) explained how teachers' expectancy might influence the teachers' classroom behavior. Due to the possibility of having different expectancy towards each group of students, teachers might behave differently towards the LPS and HPS. Teachers' overt behavior then perceived by the students as indicators of teachers' expectancy.

Symbolic Interaction Theory (originally stated by Cooley in 1912, redefined by Blumer in 1962, Coopersmith in 1967, and Myers in 2008) explained how the students might predict the teachers' expectancy towards them, by perceiving the overt behavior of their teachers. The students then use their teachers' perceived expectancy and use it as a base to evaluate themselves and form their self-esteem. Figure 5 illustrates how these theories are put together to understand how students' self-esteem is developed in BCAG-practicing schools.

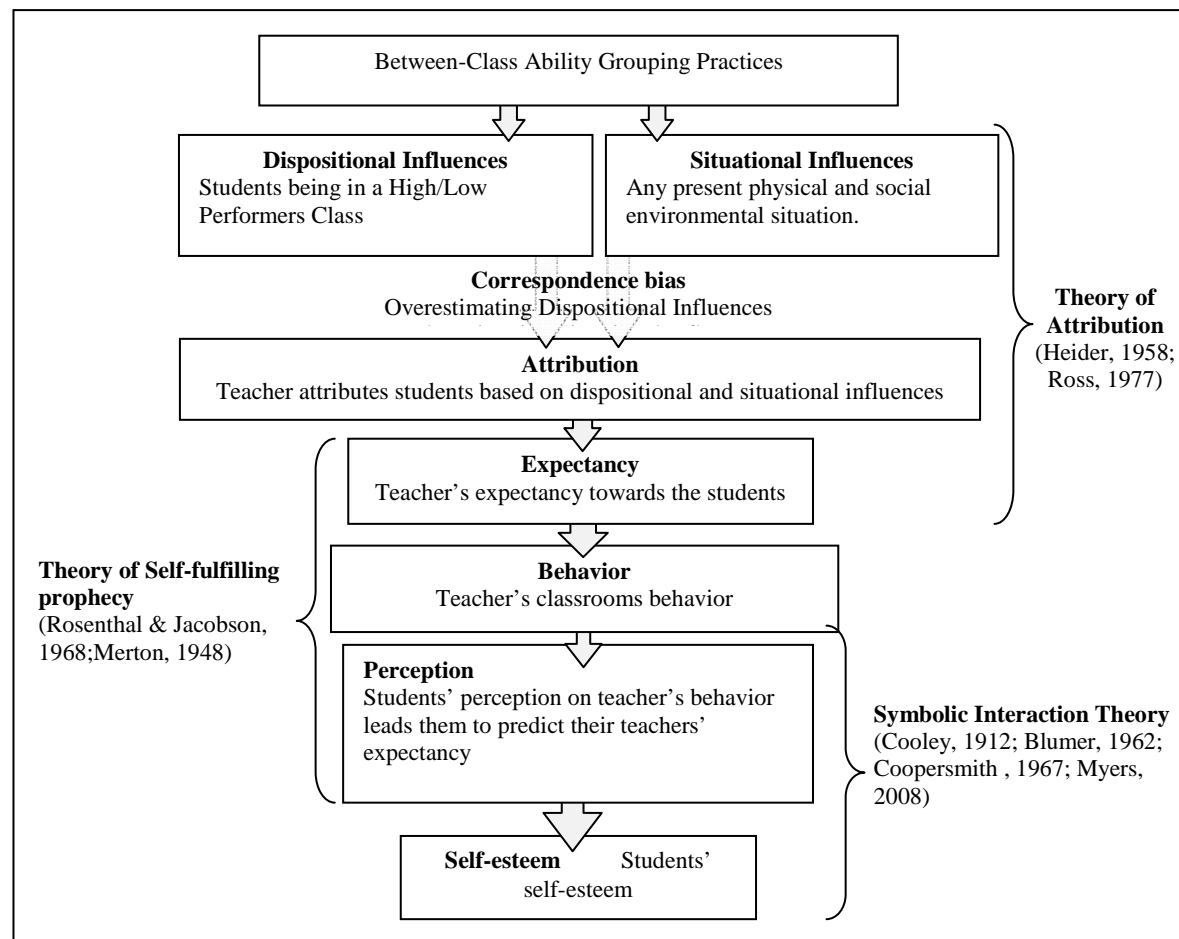


Figure 5. Theoretical framework (Adapted from Blumer, 1962; Cooley 1912; Coopersmith, 1967; Heider, 1958; and Rosenthal & Jacobson 1968).

In accordance with the theoretical perspective depicted in Figure 5, a study in Johor Bahru, Malaysia, on 302 secondary school HPS and LPS noted that self-esteem levels are significantly different between the two groups, where the HPS possess significantly higher self-esteem (Prihadi, Hairul, Hazri, 2010). While students' PTE are significantly different between HPS and LPS (Hazri, et al, 2010), it is also reported that self-esteem levels of the students were significantly affected by their own PTE. Self-esteem of HPS was significantly influenced by their perception that their teachers are being supportive, while self-esteem of LPS significantly influenced by their perception that the teachers tried to control their behavior to avoid disciplinary matters. Because the self-esteem of LPS was reported to be significantly lower, it could be concluded from their findings that teachers' supportive behavior might produce higher self-esteem compared to teachers' controlling behavior. Result of this study supported the explanation of the theories of Attribution, Self-Fulfilling Prophecy, and Symbolic Interaction.

While it is proven that the practice of BCAG might negatively affects students' self-esteem (especially LPS), the fact that BCAG practice is favored by the teachers and school managements cannot be neglected. However, in some countries where the it had been practiced for decades, students, teachers, schools, and society are used to such practice, thereby enhancing students' self-esteem will not be an easy task; without discontinuing the practice, students' self-esteem would still be affected by their PTE, where their teachers would still be affected by correspondence bias.

Most of the existing self-esteem enhancement strategies are focusing on altering the self-esteem by manipulating the participants' self-worth and/or self-competence. One of the latest self-esteem enhancement strategies by Mruk (2006) is considerably effective because it is based on the two-dimensional model of self-esteem. However, based on symbolic interaction theory, such strategy will not produce a long-lasting result because teachers' expectancy might still be influenced by BCAG practice.

A POSSIBLE SOLUTION: LOCUS OF CONTROL

Locus of Control Overview

Locus of Control (LoC) refers to the degree to which a person expects that reinforcement is contingent on his or her own behavior or personal characteristics versus the degree to which that person expects that the reinforcement is unpredictable or a function of chance, luck, fate, or anything beyond the control of oneself (Rotter, 1966). Rotter (1975, 1990) cautioned that internality and externality of LoC represent two ends of a continuum, not an either/or typology. Individuals with internal LoC tend to attribute outcomes of events to their own control. Individuals with external LoC attribute outcomes of events to external circumstances. For example, students with a strong internal LoC would believe that their grades were achieved through their own abilities and efforts, whereas those with a strong external LoC would believe that their grades are the result of good or bad luck, or to a teacher who designs bad tests or grades capriciously. As a result, students with external LoC are less likely to expect that their own efforts will result in success and are therefore less likely to work hard for high grades.

This view was supported by Ryckman (1993) who stated that students who perceived that academic success was controlled by chance or fate relied less on their experiences in dealing with current behavior, study less, and performed poorly than the students who perceived that academic success was determined by their own skills and competence. In addition, due to their locating control outside themselves, students with external LoC tend to feel they have less control over their fate. Individuals with an external locus of control tend to be more stressed and prone to clinical depression (Maltby, Day & Macaskill, 2007).

According to Blumenfeld (1992), students who believe that their past failures on particular tasks were due to the lack of abilities are unlikely to expect to succeed in similar tasks, and are unlikely to exert much effort. It was indicated that LoC did not mediate learning directly; instead, it affected learning outcomes through the learners' expectations of success. Slavin (1994) stated that it is important to note that LoC of an individual might be depended on the particular activity and situation, and it is difficult to study the effect of LoC on achievement due to the fact that achievement has a strong effect on LoC.

The significance of LoC as a predictor of behavior was stated by Gregory (1981) by stating that individuals with internal LoC take more responsibilities for the outcomes of their behaviors compared to individuals with external LoC. It is indicated that students with internal LoC feel that they have the abilities to control the outcome of their behaviors, hence would likely to try to ensure success and overcome failures than their counterparts with external LoC. In addition, It was also indicated that LoC (together with perceived academic performance and self-esteem) is significantly associated with

suicidal tendency among adolescence (Martin, et al., 2005). The study by Schwartz and Kaslow (2000) indicated that extreme LoC (both external and internal) would predict a lower self-esteem scores, and it is indicated that both self-esteem and LoC played significant role on suicidal tendencies. It could be concluded that self-esteem and LoC are interrelated to one another, yet both of them are strong predictors of behavior.

A study by Goodman, Cooley, Sewell, and Leavitt (1994) supported the fact that LoC and self-esteem are correlated to one another. They studied 113 low-income African-American women including 26 who had been diagnosed as depressed, 54 diagnosed as schizophrenic, and 33 well women in an effort to extend previous hypotheses of the association between depression and the two personality constructs of low self-esteem and external LoC to this population. Lower self-esteem scores were correlated significantly with higher levels of external LoC for both depressed and schizophrenic women but not for well controls.

A study in exclusively HPS schools

A recent study by Prihadi and Hairul (2011) on high-performance schools (exclusively HPS) in Indonesia indicated that the influence of PTE on Self-Esteem is mediated by their internal LoC. The study was conducted in high-performance school due to Mruk's Two-Dimensional Model of Self-Esteem (2DMSE). In a normal school where HPS and LPS are mixed, self-worth of HPS is being supported by their being addressed as better than the LPS, and their self-competence is supported by their previous academic reports, which are obviously higher than the other students in the school. It is clear that HPS in high-performance school do not experience this privilege, because they do not have LPS counterparts to be compared to, hence their self-worth is not supported as much as it is in normal schools, although they can have their self-competence supported by their high previous academic reports.

As it was hypothesized, the high-performance school students scored equally high in self-competence. This situation resulted to a unique condition where the variance of their self-esteem relies only on their self-worth, which is not actually supported in high-performance school due to the absence of LPS. When the third variable (LoC) was entered to the equation, it showed a significant mediating value; without the existence of high *internal* LoC, the PTE affects self-esteem significantly. In other words, when the students possess internal LoC, their PTE does not affect their self-esteem (Prihadi & Hairul, 2011). This result had shown that when students possessed high internal LoC, their self-esteem will not likely to be affected by their PTE. For instance, students who believe that they are in control of their own events will not be affected by their PTE; their self-esteem will not be affected by the way they perceive their teachers expected them to be. Therefore, once the students' LoC is becoming internal, their self-esteem will be somehow becoming more 'protected' from any classroom behavior showed by their teachers.

How altering LoC might improve students' Self-Esteem in Secondary Schools

Internal LoC is often referred to self-efficacy, the belief that one's behavior makes a difference (Bandura, 1989). It can be very important in explaining a student's school performance (Slavin, 2006). For instance, it has been reported that students who are high in internal LoC have better grades and test scores than do students of the same intelligence, who are low in internal LoC. Even though Slavin (2006) stated that in reality, students' success could be a product of both external and internal factors (abilities, efforts, task difficulty, teachers' behaviors, etc.), it was also reported that students' LoC is the second most important predictor (after ability) of a student's academic achievement (Bong, 2001; Pietsch, Walker, & Chapman, 2003). The reason is that students who believe that academic success is due to luck, teachers' whims, or other external factors, are unlikely to work hard, while students who believe that their efforts determine their success can be expected to work harder.

While completely removing BCAG practice from educational system does not sound possible, and attempts to improve students' self-esteem by directly addressing the self-esteem will not produce a long-lasting result, improving students' internal LoC can be one of the alternative to solve the self-esteem problems among the secondary school students. Behavior Modification strategy (Skinner, 1974) can be one of the effective strategies to improve students' self-esteem through elevating internal LoC.

Behavior Modification strategy is considered potentially successful because it is based on overt behavior, and identifying behavior of students with certain LoC is a possible task to have done. Subsequently, the behaviors related to internal LoC should be paired with desirable outcome (e.g. rewards) in order to create the likelihood of the particular behavior to be more frequently occurred. As the behavior increases, fading of reinforcement should be done either by gradually increasing the level

of difficulty in obtaining the same reward or through intermittent reinforcement whereby students' behavior will only be rewarded at certain times. The idea of reinforcing behaviors that exhibit an internal locus of control is to show the relationship between locus of control and a rewarding outcome. In other words, students will be able to see that behaviors that show an internal locus of control will result in a desirable outcome. When the idea has been implanted in the students, it is expected that they will be motivated to show behaviors that indicate an internal LoC even without any external reinforcement, which will then move towards a more self-regulated type of learning (Chua & Lee, 2011).

While Behavior Modification strategy looks promising, it is recommended for the future researchers to study the details and develop the precise module to meet its purpose. Furthermore, this strategy should be easily applied by the teachers or included in school policy without altering the original academic goals or grouping practices. As discussed previously, self-esteem is one of the major elements of students' psychological well-being that contributes to the students' future success. Therefore, any strategy to elevate it should be considered important to be applied at schools.

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