

# ARTICLE REVIEW ON “RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY AND NARRATIVE THERAPY”

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## INTRODUCTION

The study and application of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) and Narrative Therapy (NT) are essential and employed in enhancing one's self-esteem and reducing the depression and other problems, which are fundamental aspects in Guidance and Counseling. Hence an Article Review has been done on “Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy and Narrative Therapy” on the thesis submitted to Osmania University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in “Psychology” in March 2009.

The Article begins with one's significant period of adolescence in one's life time and the teenage problems in the recent years. This has caused the necessity of the present day adolescents coming for counseling for depression, sexual problems, drug and alcohol, the problems that were not heard of a few decades ago. The present day nuclear families increased independence, and exploration of their limits. According to Owen (1995) most of the adolescents begin to feel that they know themselves better than others, often creating conflicts with parents and peer expectations. Many adolescents have low self-esteem, the main reasons being drugs, alcohol, multiple relationships, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and underperformance.

Self-esteem refers to an individual's sense of his or her value or worth, or the extent to which a person values, approves of, appreciates or like him or herself. Self-esteem is considered the valuation component of the self concept. It encompasses an individual's beliefs, behaviors and emotions. Self-esteem plays a crucial role in the development of personality of college students.

The author talks about two Intervention Techniques to enhance self-esteem, one based on Narrative Therapy or the re-authorizing of the clients' stories, so as to change the perception the client holds. And on Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) to bring about a constructive change in the thinking patterns of the clients.

REBT is a brief direct solution oriented therapy that focuses on resolving specific problems facing a troubled individual. This is a form of Cognitive Behavior Therapy set forth by Ellis in 1953, The concept of REBT is that the emotion suffering results primarily from our beliefs and met by the events occurring in our lives. Hence it is important should be healthy and rational since their consequences are emotional growth and happiness. The irrational beliefs shall be identified, disputed and replaced with rationals. Once the client is equipped with healthy beliefs, emotional difficulties and problematic behavior are abated. – W. Dryden (1985).

Alfred Adler has said that we are not influenced by “facts”, but are by the interpretation of the facts. Albert Ellis stated that emotions, thoughts and behavior are interrelated and all three interact continuously and affect one another. REBT identifies client's basic philosophies of life,

see exactly how self defeating their beliefs are and to persuade them to work cognitively, emotionally and behaviorally to change these patterns.

Many literatures have been reviewed and detailed by the author in three sections of research on Self-esteem first on Adolescence and self-esteem, second on low self-esteem and the third on intervention techniques used (Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy and Narrative Therapy).

Self-esteem is the experience of being competent to cope with basic challenges of live and of being worthy of happiness. It is positive or negative orientation towards oneself, an overall evaluation of one's worth. The benefits of high self esteem enhanced initiative and pleasant feelings. Positive self-esteem enhances one's ability to cope effectively with stress because individuals with poor coping mechanisms are more vulnerable to environmental stresses. Heyman, Dweek & Cain (1992).

Adolescent self-esteem was more a function of the reflected appraisal of the parents and female adolescents were more likely to be influenced by their parents, than were male adolescents. Openshaw, D.K; Thomas, D>L & Rollins, B.C (1984)

The global self esteem of adolescents was examined in relation to two aspects of their daily lives: a) the perceived quality of their relationships with parents and peers and b) their self evaluation in the areas of school, popularity and athletics. The quality of relationships with parents made significant contributions in self esteem of both boys and girls. The quality of peer relationships made a significant additional contribution for girls but not boys. Walker., L & Greene, J (1986). Father's education has a small positive relationship with adolescent's self esteem and nontraditional measures had moderate to strong associations with self esteem. Wiltfang, G.L & Scarbuz, M (1990)

Subjects with high self-esteem increased task liking, after positive feedback, where as those with low self-esteem decreased task liking. – Tang, T.L & Starsfield- Baldwin L (1991)

The author has noted that there is a significant relationship among self-esteem, health values and health behavior for both younger and older adolescents and self esteem improves the mental health behavior, social and health behavior. - Rivas Torres, RM & Fernandez P (1995)

The effects of parent and peer attachment on self image in adolescence are positively related. The relationship of parent attachment to self image is stronger than peer attachment. Females show stronger self image across areas of attachment. – O' Koon, J (1997)

In another study of adolescence coping strategies and self esteem, analysis revealed that adolescents with lower self esteem utilized more avoidance coping strategies than adolescents with higher self esteem. In addition males reported utilizing avoidance coping strategies more frequently than females. – Chapman, P.L.; Mullis R.L. (1999)

The benefits of high self esteem are one enhanced initiative and pleasant feelings and two, a reduction in chances of bulimia in females in the presence of high self-esteem. - Baumeister, R.F, Campbell, J.D, Kreuger, J.I & vohd, K.D (2003)

An investigative study indicated that as self-esteem increased, stress increased, suicidal thoughts increased. Willburn, V.R. & Smith, D.E (2005).

These results revealed that adolescents scoring in the top thirds of self esteem at the age of 12 and 18 show significantly lower levels of pessimism than those whose self esteem had changed or stayed low during adolescent years.

## **EFFECTS OF LOW SELF ESTEEM**

The impacts of low self esteem on students describe personality & vulnerability to suicide, eating disorder and negative thinking. Thus it becomes imperative to find strategies to enhance self esteem.

In the investigation of the relationship between jealousy and low self esteem for boys and girls, analysis indicated a reverse relationship for girls. Lower the self esteem, higher the jealousy. It is significantly and negatively related to self esteem.- Stewart, R.A & Beathy, M.J (1985)

Depression was significantly related to suicidal behavior. Damon (1991) found for most children low self esteem only translate in to temporary emotional discomfort, but for others low self esteem can result in depression, suicide tendency, eating disorders and delinquency. Low self-esteem people rated their general intelligence and competencies more negatively after failure than after success.

High self esteem subjects on other hand rated their intelligence a bit more positively after failure than after success. – Brown (1990)

People with lower esteem may be less likely to accept positive feedback from themselves than from an external source but likely to accept negative feedback from the self and outsider. In contrast when the positive feedback comes from a knowledgeable source both high and low self esteem people accept it. When self generated feedback was negative, participants low in self esteem accepted it. – Joseph, R.A, Bosson, J.K & Jacobs. C.G (2003)

Jealousy is significantly and negatively related to self esteem. Non users of alcohol had perceived less peer support than all users but had higher self concepts than heavy users. Subjects with low self esteem were more likely to consume alcohol to gain some degree of peer acceptance and support. Parish, J.G. & Parish T.S. (1991)

Girls with low self esteem at 11-12 years old are at significantly greater risk of developing the more severe signs of eating disorders and other psychological problems by the age of 15-16. – Button, E.J.; Sonuga Barke, E.J.S.; Davies,J, Thompson, M.(1996)

Parents with high self esteem value and encourage competitiveness and superior achievement and instill the same in the children. Children with higher self esteem have closer relationship with their parents than children with low self esteem. - Coopersmith, 1967; Gecas,V & Schwalbe, M.L 1986 and Kernis, M.H.2000

Many people with low self esteem believe sadness is part of life and that you shouldn't try to get rid of it while people with high self esteem believe in doing something to feel better if they have a negative experience or get in a bad mood. – Brown, J (2006)

People with low self esteem can use their Para-social relationship like favorite celebrities to feel closer to the ideals they hold for themselves. This can have benefit for people with low self esteem than that real relationship. – Derick J.L; Gabriel, L.S; Tippin, B (2008)

Many among children of age group 8-9 years, self esteem increases up to the early adolescence 12-13 years, but then declines during the adolescence until the end of high school 16-18 years. This mirrors patterns in materialism, which increased in early adolescence but decreases in late adolescence during transition into younger adulthood. – Nguyen, C.L & Roedder, J.D (2007)

Symptoms of low self esteem and its impact on relationship are: 1) Not spending much time in the present moment thus affecting present relationship 2) Individuals with low self esteem often want something they can't have or is out of reach for them 3) Doing things that undermine success or constantly pulling oneself down. 4) Job-hopping and having and having intimacy issues with partners 5) they keep busy so that they don't have to deal with feelings that they keep hidden 6) and proneness to addictions.

## **INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES AND LOW SELF ESTEEM**

Narrative Therapy and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy focus their effectiveness on self esteem and self acceptance. The studies in REBT reflect relationship between irrational beliefs and low self esteem and they enhance self acceptance. Ellis, A (1995) states that irrational beliefs significantly contributed and caused emotional and behavioral disturbances.

A significant negative correlation was found between self esteem and irrational beliefs. Four specific beliefs were used as predictors of low self esteem; demand for approval, high self expectation, anxious over concerns and problem avoidance. It was found that subjects high in these four areas were found to have low self esteem. – Daly, M.J & Burton, R.L (1983)

REBT has helped effectively deal with self esteem, depression, social anxiety in adult volunteers. People cope with inferiority by striving for compensatory superiority through mastery, competence and perfection. Elliott, J.E (1992)

Yong R (1992) administered rational –group theory to a group of university students suffering a sense of inferiority because of their examination failures. Significant improvement was observed based on their scores on the Sixteenth Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF), their self scoring and their academic achievement.

Sapp, M (1996) describes how REBT and the cognitive behaviour therapies were used to improve achievement based on studies with students of the middle school level. REBT postulates that self defeating behaviors stem from irrational beliefs contributing to low self esteem, academic self-concept and academic failure. Results found that the intervention improved academic achievement, academic self concept and self esteem.

A self-paced interactive multimedia computer intervention designed to teach rational thinking focused on changing a mid array of irrational beliefs across four categories of self esteem; Peer relations, Academic ability, Role in family and Body image. Students from computer intervention group significantly improved on self esteem. – Kornfield, S (1996)

Negative thoughts of undergraduates low in self esteem, wer restructured into more adaptive self statements and endorsed positive thoughts were modified in to self statements that accentuated the positive aspect of thought. This procedure increased scores o self esteem and decreased depression scores.-Philpot,D,; Bonburg, W (1996)

REBT was very effective in the treatment of adult victims of childhood sexual abuse. Results indicated significant reduction in depression, state anxiety, state anger, state guilt and low self esteem. – Rieckert J; Moller A.T. (2000)

Rational Emotive Counseling program reduces the tension and improves logical thinking among students. – Dawood N & Dirasat S (2001)

REBT is very effective on students' achieving motivation. Hence REBT shall be included in the curriculum of training counselors and secondary schools for effective use of the techniques in helping students. REBT is used as form of Intervention on children and adolescents to enhance self esteem. Vernon, A; Yankura, J; Dryden, W (1997).

## **NARRATION THERAPY AND SELF ESTEEM**

“Narration Therapy” is an approach in counseling and community work and is sometimes known as “re-authorising” or “re-storying” conversations. It centers people as experts in their own lives and views problems as separate from people. Narrative Theory assumes that people have many

skills, competencies, beliefs, commitments and abilities that assist them to reduce the influence of problems in their lives. Narrative therapy is the exploration of the alternative knowledge and skills present in the individual.

Adolescent self esteem is localized in relationships with peers and is based on different rational schemes for females than for males.

For females memories about wanting to help female friends were associated with high levels of self esteem. For males memories about successfully assisting oneself with male friends were associated with high levels of self esteem. – Thorne, A; Michaelien, Q (1996)

High self esteemed subjects more frequently justified their behavior in the negative episode, and focused on their own achievements and outcomes in the positive episode. Low self esteem subjects admitted some wrong doings, tried to excuse it in the negative episode, and described themselves as social minded and altruistic in the positive episode. High self esteem subjects aim at being admired for their abilities and low self esteem subjects aim at being for being nice. – Schuetz, A (1998)

Female consistently recalled more childhood memories than males did and were generally faster in accessing the memories, especially memories of events associated with emotion. – Davis, P.J (1996)

In another research experiment, music was used to induce a negative mood in a group of subjects and it was found that high self esteem subjects recalled more positive memories than did low self esteem subjects. Consequently the high self esteem subjects experienced a greater elevation in mood. – Setliff, A.E; Marmurek . H.C (2002)

Findings of another research experiment strengthen the view that self esteem is a rich a source of knowledge about the self that can influence memory for some kind of autobiographical experience. – Christensen, T.C.; Wood, J.V.; Feldman, B.L. (2003)

Further it was revealed that analyzing life's narratives is critical in understanding how youths perceive themselves and social environment. – Thomas, D.M (2004)

When people evaluate the self through the lens of autobiographical memory, interpersonal distress is portrayed as specially damaging and achievement success is portrayed as especially enhancing. - Pillemer, D.B.; Ivcevic, Z & goose, A (2007)

These studies reflect the effectiveness of Narrative Therapy as an approach to enhance self esteem in students. The use of Narration Therapy in schools helps provide different and multiple alternatives to the problems. Women recall more memories from childhood and most of the memories revolve around the need to help and being in peer relationship. Themes of mastery, achievement were common in the case of memories related to positive self regard and in cases of negative memories, the themes revolved around disappointment, depression and disillusionment. The two interventions REBT and Narration Therapy increase the self-esteem in adolescents.

The author had summarized the article and the findings of the study which has important implications & suggestions for future research in the areas of self esteem and finding alternative methods to enhance self esteem in college students.

They are summarized as follows:

1. Periodic assessment of factors leading to low self-esteem can help in effectively working in enhancing self-esteem.

2. Adolescent behavior and factors contributing to self-esteem can be studied in detail to counteract the effects of low self-esteem.
3. Intervention technique could be introduced to subjects to help them effectively deal with low self-esteem.
4. Life skills program could be designed using concepts of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy and Narrative Therapy.
5. Counseling in colleges could be made mandatory to work with adolescent problems.
6. Classroom activities could be designed for students to identify low self-esteem and strategies to introduce to work on oneself.
7. Orientation Programs for staff, management and parents could be introduced to help them understand adolescent behavior and in instilling positive self-regard in their wards.
8. Encouraging overall development of the individual.
9. Encourage and assist in developing positive self-esteem in students.
10. Encourage interaction between students and teachers and at home between children and parents.

In my opinion also the research and the article said above has highlighted well the basic concepts of Adolescents Self-esteem and the two important Intervention Techniques, namely the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy and the Narrative Therapy. The emphasis has been on the understanding each of these concepts and seeing if a relationship between them could exist. Adolescence is period of storm and stress and it is a period where the individual tries to define oneself and understand its role in society. Hence these studies are on Adolescent behavior, self-esteem, and Narrative & Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy as techniques to enhance Self-esteem of students.

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