

Dyad: self-esteem – academic success, evidenced by counseling activity

di **Daciana Lupu, Simona Tomozii**

Abstract

La ricerca mira ad indagare l'influenza di un programma migliorativo sulla stima globale di sé di preadolescenti con ridotta autostima e a monitorare i cambiamenti occorsi nei risultati accademici. Partiamo, infatti, dall'ipotesi che, se i punteggi di autostima globale di preadolescenti con bassa autostima aumentano dopo aver conseguito il diploma, si possa avere una curva ascendente nei risultati accademici grazie a tale programma. Il gruppo di ricerca è composto da 126 preadolescenti, sia maschi che femmine, di età compresa tra 12 e 13 anni. Sono stati selezionati studenti a bassa e medio-bassa autostima (che avevano ottenuto un punteggio 29 nella scala di Rosenberg). Abbiamo utilizzato la scala di Rosenberg per la misurazione dell'autostima e metodi di documentazione basati sui voti dei registri per i risultati accademici. Gli esiti della ricerca ci permettono di concludere che il programma ha migliorato l'autostima dei soggetti e i loro risultati accademici.

Parole chiave:

autostima, successo scolastico, preadolescenza, programma di miglioramento al fine di aumentare l'autostima

The research aims to investigate the influence of an ameliorative program over the global self esteem of preadolescences with reduced self esteem and to track changes occurred on their academic results. We assume that if the scores of global self esteem of preadolescents with low self esteem increases after they graduate an ameliorative program, we expect to have an ascendant curve for the academic results. The research group is made of 126 preadolescences, both boys and girls. There were selected students with low to medium-low self-esteem (whom scored under 29, at the Rosenberg Scale for self esteem measuring). We measured the self esteem with Rosenberg scale and the academic results by documentation methods: grades' registries. The results concludes that after an ameliorative program take place, the preadolescent improve their self esteem and their academic results.

Key words:

self-esteem, academic success, preadolescence, ameliorative program aiming to increase self esteem

Dyad: self-esteem

– academic success, evidenced by counseling activity

1. Background

56

The self esteem remains one of nowadays challenges. No matter if the self esteem is too low or unrealistically raised without having a real fundament in the personality structure; in both cases it produces unbalance. There are situation when the self esteem may have rapid fluctuations causing to psychical discomfort. A large series of synonyms are used when pointing to the self esteem concept: self respect, self appreciation, self satisfaction, self contentment, self-assessment, self-pride, self consideration and appreciation. Here comes a legitimate question, what is actually the self esteem? The concept's etymology comes from the Latin word "oestionare" and it has means assessment and estimation. The concept has a dual signification: to decide the value and to have an opinion about something. At present, that English speakers use the concept of self esteem with the meaning of self estimation, self appreciation while the French speakers see it more as self conceit (approaching it from an emotional perspective). Most of the definitions accentuate the evaluative aspect of the self. The Romanian Explanatory Dictionary (1988) defines only a part of that word "a feeling of valuation determined by somebody's or something's credits or qualities". Hayes (2003, p. 16) describes the self esteem as "making value judgements about what is good or bad". Argyle sees the self esteem as "the self assessment, resulting in self acceptance and self valorisation, when compared to others or not" (1967, p. 120), and André and Lelord follow the same line when defining the self-esteem as "a judgemental view over ourselves which is vital for psychological balance" (2003, p. 61). Constantin (2004, p. 253) also highlights the evaluative procedure, but it adds some affective connotations of the self esteem: "it indicates the individuals' emotions when referring to their own person".

There are experts that perceive the self esteem as one of the in the human needs, such as Albu for whom the self esteem was "an urgent need with a survival value", seeing it as an "benchmark and foundation of life and each individual activity" (2002, p. 77). Also the André and Lelord see it as a "profound and strong human need" (1999/2003, p.

77). The self esteem is seen as a personality attribute. Doron i Fr. Parot (1999, p. 745) considered the self esteem as “a personality trait when compared with the value that an individual assigns to its own personality” – Bednar, G. Wells i S. Peterson (1996) placed the self esteem in relation with the personality–motivation–affectivity, considering it a “sustainable and emotional sense of personal worth, based on an accurate perception of self”. On the personal value perceived personal value direction, the definition offered by the *Dictionnaire actuel de l'éducation* seems to be large broad and imprecise: “the global view offered by the individuals about themselves” (2005, p. 617).

2. Presentation of the Study

The research objective is investigate the influence of the ameliorative program over the global self esteem in the case of preadolescents with a low self esteem and to identify the changes that occurred in the academic results. *The research hypothesis:* If the global self esteem scores of preadolescents with a low self esteem have positive changes after fulfilling an ameliorative program, we expect that the academic results to perform a slight upward curve. The research lot: 126 preadolescents (enrolled in 10 classes of the 6th graders, from 5 schools) were in the experimental group and 127 preadolescents formed the control group (enrolled in other 10 classes of the 6th graders from 5 schools). Thus, the experimental lot had 126 subjects of whom 68 persons (54%) were females and 58 (46%) were males. The control group had 127 subjects of whom 66 (52%) were females and 61 males (48%) (Figures 1 and 2 represent the proportion in which schools contributed with students first to the experimental group and second the control group).

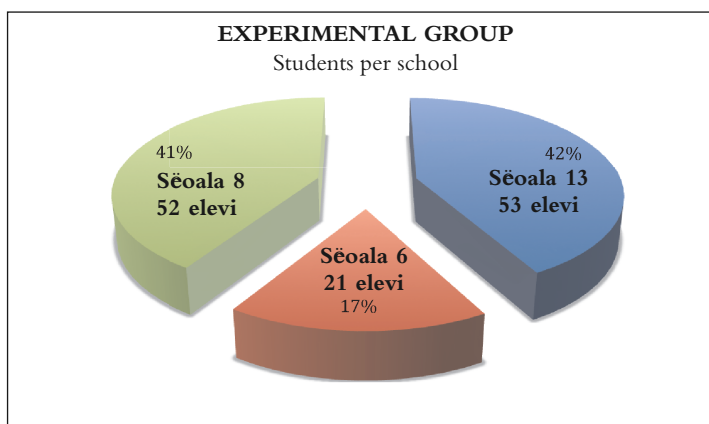


Fig. 1: School percentage for the experimental group

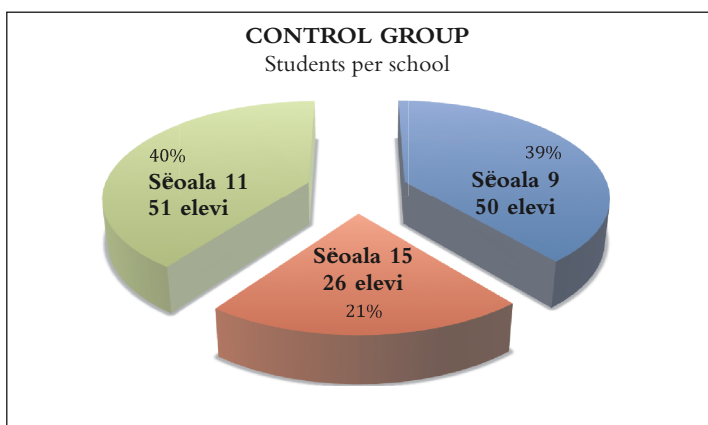


Fig. 2: School percentage for the control group

For both research groups there can be made comparisons from the point of view final grades at the graduation of 5th and 6th grade (Figure 3. and Figure 4).

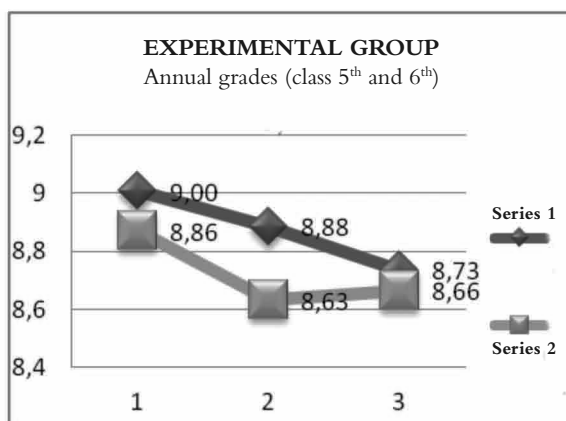


Fig. 3: Final grades – Experimental group

Under the temporary coordinates the research extended up to 2 years: in the first year (there was created the ameliorative program and it was also tested) and in the second year of research (it took place the initial assessment of the two research groups- pre-test, the ameliorative program implementation and the final assessment for the experimental and the control group- post-tests). The experiment, surveys, school documents study (registry) and statistical methods.

- 1) The experiment – in the designed experiment, the independent variable was self esteem of the preadolescents who participate in the ameliorative program of Counselling. The ameliorative program

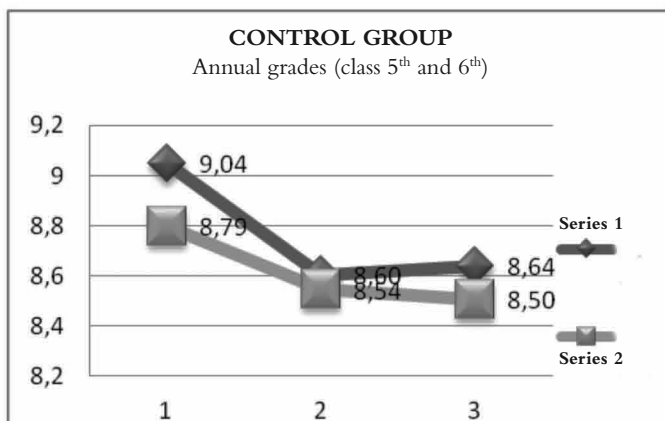


Fig. 4: Final grades – Control group

Note: (1)-School No.8;(2)-School No.6;(3)-School No.13

Note: (1)-School No.19;(2)- School No.9;(3)- School No.15

Series 1- final grades for 5th grade

Series 2: final grades for 6th grade

aimed to raise the level of self esteem of preadolescent with low and medium low self esteem. Increasing the self esteem of adolescents with low and medium low self esteem can influence the school performance, and can facilitate the awareness of success in different areas (sports, artistic, international, physical attractively) – dependent variables. The activities from the ameliorative program combined group activities (group counselling -18 meeting) with individual ones (individual counselling – 3 meetings). By these meeting the students had the opportunity to better know themselves and others (classmates), to relate to others, to exchange opinions under the guidance of a specialist – the school counsellor. Perhaps the most important aspect was give real value to their for the strengths they have different areas: academic, artistic, relational and from the point of view of their corporal self esteem (physical attractiveness). The number of hours for the activities of the program was of 21 meetings.

- 2) The Rosenberg Scale for Self Esteem measures the general feeling of personal growth, the general self esteem. Low scores of low self esteem show a global negative perception of personal value while persons confident in their skills and with high degree of satisfaction for personal achievements have high self esteem scores.
- 3) The school documents study: registers and notepads – provide indirect information about the educational activity, especially over its results.

3. Results of the study

Self esteem was assessed before the ameliorative program start and then was again measured at the end of it. The results are presented in the following figures, in the first one the results of the experimental group and in the second of the control group.

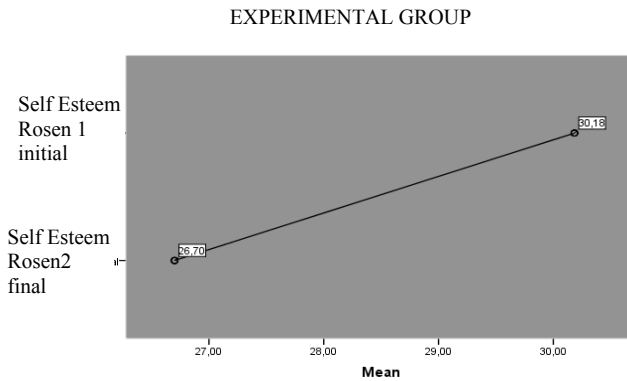


Fig. 5: Experimental group means of initial assessment and of final assessment

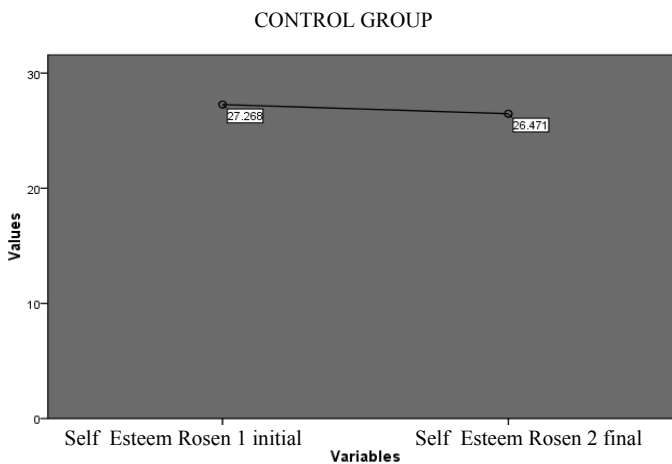


Fig. 6: Control group means of initial assessment and of final assessment

The results presented in Figure 5 belong to students from the experimental group. One can notice an increase of global self esteem from the initial assessment stage to the post-tests phase. See table 3 Rosen1. with a mean of 26.69 which modifies positive at the end of

the ameliorative program and Rosen2. with a mean of 30.18. The standard error for Rosen 1 was of 2.49 and for Rosen 2 of 3.29. Scores spreading around core values is greater for post-tests stage, while for the initial stage the values grouped around average are homogenous. Dispersion also is higher for the results obtained at second application of the Rosenberg Scale (Rosenberg 2). At the initial test participated 126 preadolescents and at the final one 120. The difference consisting 6 teenagers is explained by the transfers at other schools or by the delay which are medically motivated. The lowest score shows a slide increase from the value of 17,00 for Rosen 1 self esteem to 18,00 for Rosen 2 self esteem. For the highest score the maximum score the self esteem increased with 5 points from 31,00 for Rosen 1 to 36,00 for Rosen 2. In Figure 6 we can see at the control group that the scores from the initial evaluation are higher than those from the final one (27,26 for Rosen 1 self esteem and 26.47 for Rosen 2 self esteem). The decreasing is associated with a standard error of 3.10 points for Rosen 1 and 4.92 for Rosen 2. Scores spreading around the central values is higher in the final phase, while in the initial assessment one the results are grouped more homogenous, as in the case of the experimental group. The values for the control group decrease while those for the experimental one increase. Also the dispersion is higher in the second assessment phase when we applied the Rosenberg self esteem scale (Rosenberg 2).

In Fig. 6 we can observe how the results of the initial and final assessment of control group register a decrease (27,26 for Rosen 1 self esteem and 26,47 for Rosen 2 self esteem). The decrease is associated with a standard error of 3,10 for Rosen self esteem and with 4,92 for Rosen 2 self esteem. Scores spreading around the core values is greater for the post-test phase while for the initial one, the values are grouped more homogeneous around the average, results similar to those from the experimental group. The mean values for the control group decrease while the results for the experimental one rise. Also the dispersion is higher for the results obtained in the case of final assessment at the application of Rosenberg Scale (Rosenberg2).

There are positive changes of value for the global self esteem. We can see in the experimental group case how the range for low scores (15-20) maintains while from phase one to phase 2 with the same number of students (2 students) (Figure 7. and Figure 8.).

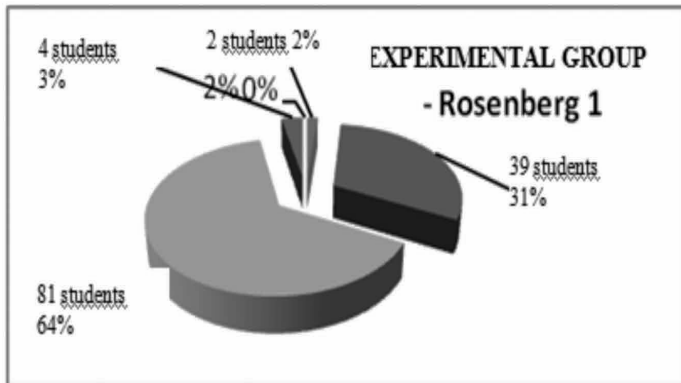


Fig. 7: Experimental group – cumulative frequencies

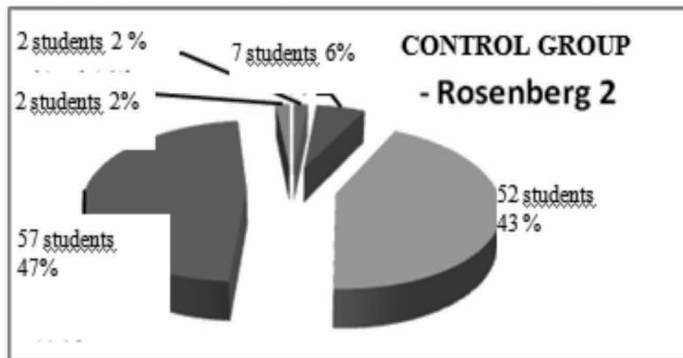


Fig. 8: Experimental group–cumulative frequencies in pre-test phase for 5 ranges of scores in post-test phase for 5 ranges of scores

Note: 1 range 15-20; 2 – range 21-25; 3 – range 26-30;
4 – range 31-35; 5 – range 36-40

If at first assessment there were 41 preadolescent with scores up to 25, at the final assessment Rosenberg 2, their number lowered to 9 (see Figure 7. and Figure 8.). The same decline can be seen at the range of scores 26-30, ie 81 to 52 preadolescents. However in the high scores of global self esteem is a significant the improvement of the scores is significant from 4 to 57 students (for the range of scores 31 to 35), from 0 to 2 students for scores on top (36 to 40). Significant growth has occurred for the range of scores 31to 35. It is assumed to be the effect of the counselling activities of the ameliorative program.

	SELF ESTEEM SCORES			Number of students who didn't graduated school
	Stagnate (students' number)	Lowers (students' number)	Rises (students' number)	
EXPERIMENTAL GROUP (126 students)	10 students (7,91%)	7 students (5,55%)	103 students (81,74%)	6 students (4,80%)
CONTROL GROUP (127 students)	25 students (19,68%)	65 students (51,18%)	30 students (23,83%)	7 students (5,52%)

Table 1: Registered results after the application of Rosenberg Scale-final assessment (post-tests)

It can be seen how the experimental group results had suffered positive changes in a very high percentage (81.74%) compared with the control group (23,83%). Why this difference? The interpretation can focus on the different contexts the preadolescent have to face within 11 to 13 years old. The situations create tension and they come from the external environment: parents, teachers, friends, and classmates, other significant adults from their life and even from the society. Still the most important are the pressures come from the preadolescent himself, from his self. Those internal pressures reach: physical self imagine, scholar expectances, the desire to engage in sport or artistic activities, popular or unpopular, etc. The adolescent face them better when supported by significant adults around him: parents, teachers and scholar counsellor. An important role is played by educational counsellor who can polarise the activities held in school and in the family in a manner in which his/her self esteem rises and he/she will be able to value more the potential of success in all areas of life: academic, artistic, relational and the corporal self image (physical attractiveness). The educational counsellor can also initiate programs or program sequences with ameliorative purpose allowing students to better know themselves, to assess both the self image and the self esteem.

Another researched area is represented by the preadolescents' scholar results (the dependent variable) during the school year in which the research was conducted. At the end of each semester the results for each subject from the study plan, students' absences and behaviour grades were registered. The final grades of the 5th and 6th grade, as well as averages of the subjects of each semester can be found in the following table. (Table 2).

Experimental group	No.	Amplitude	Mini - mum	Maxi - mum	Average		Standard error	Variance
	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>
year 5 average	126	3,24	6,65	9,89	8,7524	,06559	,73620	,542
year 6 final average	119	2,93	6,90	9,83	8,5857	,07363	,80317	,645
Average grade semester 1	124	3,25	6,50	9,75	8,4752	,07515	,83682	,700
Average grade semester 1	119	3,26	6,67	9,93	8,6520	,07538	,82225	,676
Valid N	119							

Table 2: Annual and quarter results – experimental group

The reparation of academic results on school averages at the end of 5th grade is the following: for very good results (averages are found on the following range 9,01-10,00: 56 students – 44,44%) and the results seen as good (averages are found on the following range 8,01-9,00: 47 students – 37,30%) (compared with 22 students – 17,46% – with averages between 7,01 to 8,00 and only one student with an average on the inferior range 0,79%). At the end of 6th grade, the situation changes by frequency growth on average intervals: 8,01-9,00: 51 students (40,47%); 7,01-8,00: 27 students (21,42%) and 6,01-7,00: 4 students (3,17%). It can be seen a decrease on the averages interval 9,01-10,00: 38 students (30,15%). At the end of the first semester the preadolescents from the control lot had academic results (general averages for the first semester) of which were of 8,47 with a standard error of 0,083682. The minimum value for the first semester averages was 6,50 and the highest one was 9,75. At the end of second semester, after 21 hours of individual and group counselling activities, designed as part of the ameliorative program, students' averages from the second increased slightly (from 8,47 in the first semester to 8,65 in the second semester – with a standard error of 0,82225). Also the minimum value of the averages obtained in the second semester increased a little from 6,50 to 6,67. The same ascended curve is seen for the maximum value (9,75 to 9,93).

Figure 11 illustrates the averages for each semester of students in the experimental lot. The slight increase of the average value can be observed from the first towards the second semester.

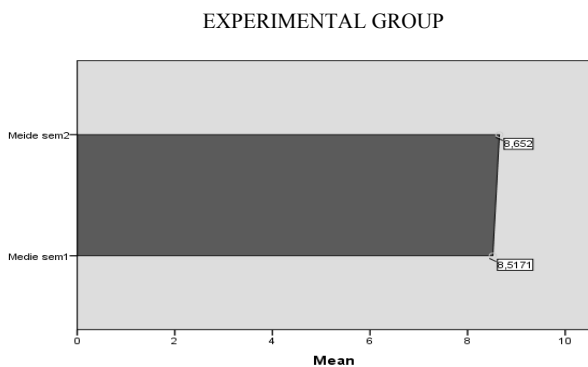


Fig 11: Mean of averages for each semester- Experimental group

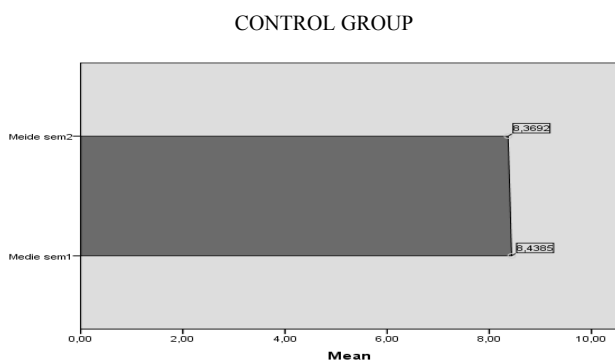


Fig.12: Mean of averages for each semester-Control group

Preadolescents' academic results from the control group had a different route (Table 3.). At the end of the first semester, for the value of the general averages of each semester had the 8,40 (with a standard error 0.84730). For the first semester the average of the averages registered a slight decrease and at the end of the semester the results indicated 8,36 (with a standard error of 0.087249). For the first semester the minimum value of the final averages was 6,13 and the maximum one of 9,94. These values lowered at the end of second semester: from 6,13 to 5,50 (the lowest value) and from 9,94 to 9,88 (the highest value).

Control group	No.	Amplitude	Mini - mum	Maxi - mum	Average		Standard error	Variance
	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>
year 5 average	127	3,42	6,54	9,96	8,6040	,07559	,85183	,726
year 6 final average	120	3,85	6,06	9,91	8,4077	,07645	,83743	,701
Average grade semester 1	124	3,81	6,13	9,94	8,4059	,07609	,84730	,718
Average grade semester 1	120	4,38	5,50	9,88	8,3693	,07965	,87249	,761
Valid N	120							

Tab. 3: Annual and quarter results-control group

The repartition of academic results on averages at the end of 5th grade, for the control group is the following: for the very good results (the range of averages lies from 9,01 to 10,00: 47 students– 37%) and good results (the range of averages is from 8,01 to 8,00 (22,83%) and only 4 students with a lower average – 3,14%). At the end of 6th grade the situation changes a little by increasing the frequencies on the ranges with median results: 8,01-9,00: 55 students (43,30%); 7,01-8,00: 30 students (23,62%) i 6,01-7,00: 5 students (3,93%). It registers a decrease on the range of averages between 9,01 to 10: 30 students (23,62%). The same situation took place with the experimental, too. The results can be justified by the tasks difficulty and by a large volume of information, which modifies from one year to another. For students from the control group the slight decrease of the averages medium value from semester one to the second is presented in the next table.

GRADES RANGES	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP		CONTROL GROUP	
	Frequencies		Frequencies	
	Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 1	Semester 2
5,01 - 6,00	-	-	-	2
6,01 - 7,00	4	4	7	3
7,01 - 8,00	34	31	32	32
8,01 - 9,00	50	34	55	52
9,01 - 10,00	36	50	30	31
<i>Incomplete situations</i>	2	7	3	7
TOTAL	126	126	127	127

Tab. 4: Frequencies of school averages for the semester 1 and 2

The data analyse proves that in the experimental group, registers a significant increase on the range of averages of 9,01-10,00 (from 36 subjects to 50 subjects – 14 cases). This enhance caused decreasing on the range of averages of 7,01-8,00 and 8,01-9,00. A major concern is represented by the constant number of subjects registered on the rage of averages with lowest scores: 6,01 to 7,00 (4 subjects). Regarding control group, the quarter averages have a different route with increased, decreased and constant number of subjects, on the most ranges. If in the experimental group case we have the same number of students on the lowest range of averages, for students from the control group we observe a decrease of averages from the second semester, which formed a new range with averages between 5,01 to 6,00. The averages for students from the control group register decreasing result also for the average ranges of 6,01 – 7,00 (4 subjects) and 8,01-9,00 (3 subjects). The only interval that looks the same for both of groups is the range of averages of: 9,01-10,00. This range shows significant increasing results of students from the experimental group (14 cases) and slight increases for subjects from the control group.

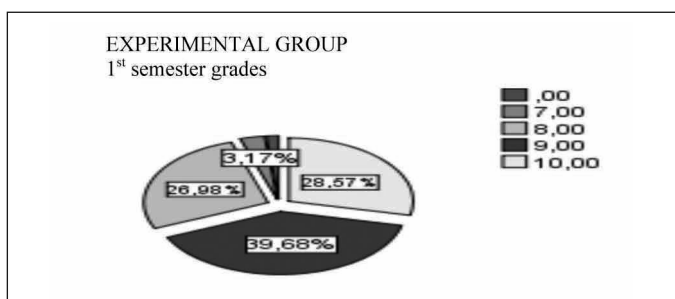


Fig.13: Averages for first semester - Experimental group

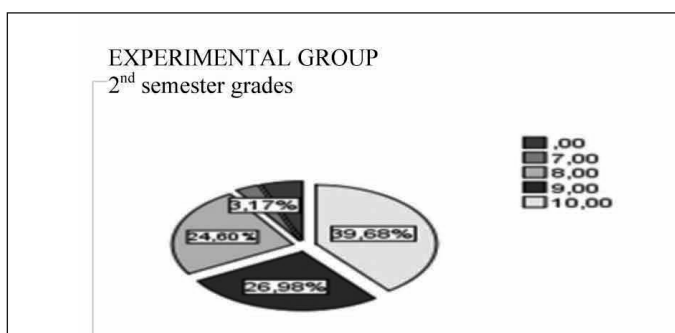


Fig. 14: Averages for second semester - Experimental group

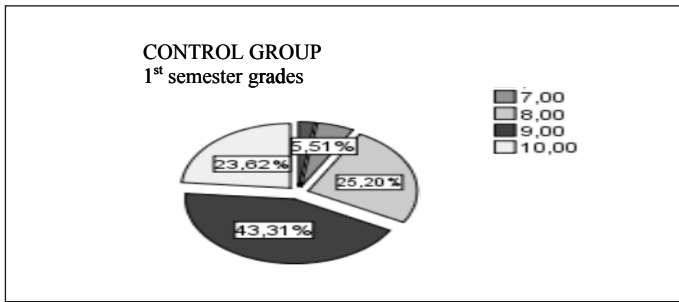


Fig. 15: Averages for first semester - Control group

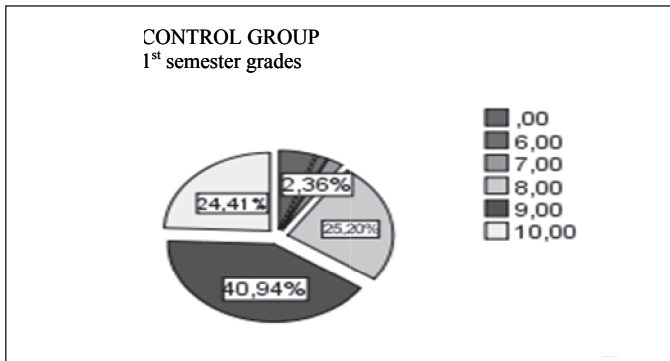


Fig.16: Averages for second semester – Control group

A comparative analysis was made, over the correlations between the averages from the second semester and the results from Rosenberg 2 Scale which was applied in the final assessment. Correlations are significant where the significance $p < 0,01$. For the experimental group, the correlation between the results from the second semester and the Rosenberg 2 Scale has a positive value of 0.044, which means that if the self-esteem increase the academic results increase, too. For control group the correlation between the academic results of the second semester and the self-esteem values from Rosenberg 2 is slightly positive (0.027). The correlation is stronger for the results received by the experimental group compared to the results of the control group. The relation between the independent variable: self-esteem and the dependent variable: academic results are illustrated in the following figures. Figure 17 shows the variables relation for the experimental group while the Figure 18 explains the preadolescents' perspective from the control group.

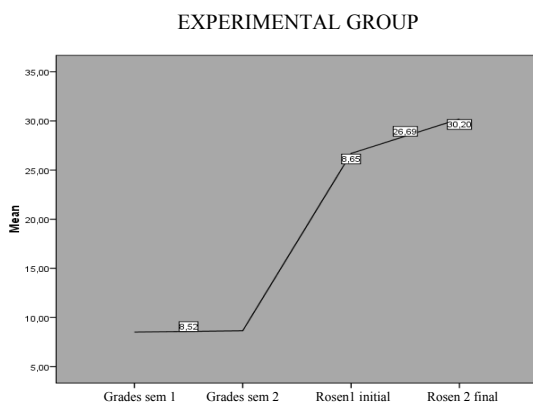


Fig.17: Experimental group - averages for semesters

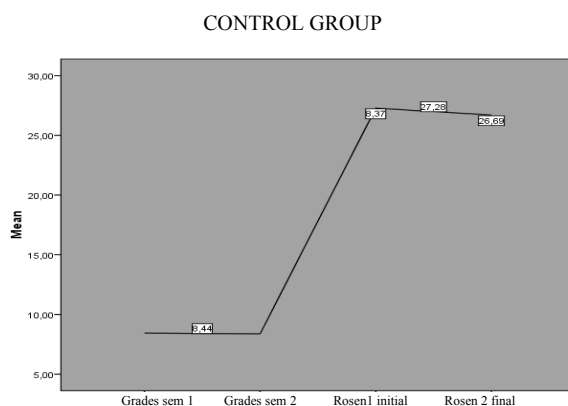


Fig.18: Control group - averages for semesters 1 and 2 and initial and final self esteem (middle values) 1 and 2 and initial and final self esteem (middle values)

4. Discussion

The conclusion that results from the two figures is that there is: a direct correlation between the increase in self-esteem and the increase in academic results regarding the experimental group. At the same time, there is another direct correlation between the decrease of self-esteem and the slight decrease of academic results for the control group, especially for the preadolescence with low and medium-low self-esteem. We conclude the implementation of different ameliorative programs aiming to develop self-knowledge, self-image, realistic self image, and self-esteem can help preadolescents in the areas including academic activity.

References

- Albu G. (2003). *Searching the authentic education*. Bucharest: Iri Press.
- André C., Lelord F. (1998). *How to express emotions*. Bucharest: Trei Press.
- Argyle M. (1967). *The Psychology of Interpersonal Behaviour*. London: Penguin Books.
- Constantin T. (2004). *Autobiographical memory*. Ia i: European Institute.
- Dewit D. (2000). The effect of school culture on adolescent behavioural problems: self-esteem, attachment to learning and peer approval of deviance as mediating mechanisms. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, 16(1), pp. 15-38.
- Doron R., Parot F. (1999). *Psychology dictionary*. Bucharest: Humanitas Press.
- Hayes N. (2003). *Psychology*. New York: The McGraw Hill Companies.
- Harter S. [1998](2000). Self and Identity development. In C. Carver, M. Scheier, *Perspective on Personality*. Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon.
- Miller D., Lavin F. (2007). But now I feel I want to give it a try: formative assessment, self-esteem and a sense of competence. *The Curriculum Journal*, 18(1), pp. 3-25.