

Self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities provided by Japanese elementary and middle school teachers

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Summary

This study examined the self-esteem of teachers themselves as a factor that may affect self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities. Moreover, this study also examined room assignment, as a factor that may affect self-esteem support for those children. Subjects were 914 elementary and middle school teachers. Analysis shows the self-esteem of teachers themselves must remain somewhat high so that they are sufficiently aware of self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities and actually seek to provide that support. Both special needs teachers and resource room teachers had greater recognition of the need for support in enhancing self-esteem than did regular classroom teachers.

Key Words : Self-esteem, developmental disabilities, Japanese elementary and middle school teachers

Numerous sources have noted that support for children with developmental disabilities must not diminish their self-esteem; maintaining or enhancing that self-esteem is crucial to preventing secondary symptoms. Educational settings in Japanese elementary and middle schools require support and recognition of the need to not diminish the self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities. However, the status of self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities provided by elementary and middle school teachers in Japan is unclear. Specifically, what forms of support are provided and how are they perceived by the teachers who provide them? In addition, the factors that affect self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities have not been studied. Thus, the status of self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities provided by elementary and middle school teachers in Japanese educational settings and factors affecting that support remain unknown. Emphasis is directed solely at the importance of self-esteem and the need for support that does not diminish children's self-esteem. To provide more effective support without diminishing the self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities, the status of efforts to enhance the self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities by teachers must be clarified. Forms of support must then be examined by taking that information into account.

Thus, the current study used factor analysis to clarify the factors that constitute self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities provided by elementary and middle school teachers. In terms of factors affecting students' self-esteem, a previous study (Lawrence, 2008) offered evidence indicating that teachers who lack self-esteem will have

difficulty enhancing the self-esteem of the children they are responsible for. Thus, the current study examined the self-esteem of teachers themselves as a factor that may affect self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities. Moreover, this study also examined room assignment (a regular classroom, a special needs classroom, or a resource room), which results in different amounts of time a teacher spends directly with a child with developmental disabilities, as a factor that may affect self-esteem support for those children.

Methods

Subjects

Survey sites were 187 elementary schools and 81 middle schools in Prefecture A. Completed surveys were received from 139 elementary schools (response rate: 74.3%) and 55 middle schools (response rate: 67.9%). Potential subjects were 836 elementary school teachers and 214 middle school teachers who agreed to cooperate with this study. Surveys that were incomplete, i.e. with missing data, were excluded. The responses analyzed were from 727 elementary school teachers (575 regular classroom teachers, 132 special needs teachers, and 20 resource room teachers) and 187 middle school teachers (124 regular classroom teachers and 63 special needs teachers), for a total of 914 subjects.

Study period

The survey was conducted from January-March 2010.

Study content

Survey of teachers regarding self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities
Preliminary survey

Questions were prepared to survey elementary and middle school teachers with regard to self-esteem support. Five elementary school teachers and 5 middle school teachers (10 teachers in total) were interviewed and asked "What are your approaches to and what are your perceptions of self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities when actually providing such support in routine educational settings?" Fifteen tentative questions were prepared based on the results of those interviews.

A preliminary survey of 3 elementary school teachers and 3 middle school teachers (6 teachers in total) was again conducted in order to determine the validity of the previously prepared questions. Respondents were asked to rate questions as appropriate or not. Specific changes were made to those questions that were deemed inappropriate. The second preliminary survey resulted in 15 questions regarding self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities.

Measurement of teacher self-esteem

The self-esteem of teachers was measured using the scale of Yamamoto, Matsui, and Yamanari (1982), which is a Japanese translation of Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1965).
Years of teaching experience and room assignment

Respondents were asked about their attributes in terms of their years of teaching experience and current room assignment.

Scoring

When surveyed about their perceptions of the self-esteem of children with developmental

disabilities, teachers responded using a 5-point scale of "I completely disagree," "I disagree somewhat," "I don't know," "I agree somewhat," and "I fully agree." Asked about their own self-esteem, teachers responded using a 5-point scale of "Doesn't apply at all," "Doesn't apply," "I don't know," "Applies somewhat," and "Fully applies." Reverse-worded items were reverse scored.

Results and Discussion

Composition and reliability of self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities provided by elementary and middle school teachers

The composition of self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities provided by elementary and middle school teachers was clarified by factor analysis (principal factor solution: varimax rotation) of all items. Eigenvalues, cumulative contributions, factor loadings of 0.40 or greater, and factor interpretability were taken into account; as a result, 3 main factors were isolated (Table 1). Two questions, No. 2 ("I have difficulty accurately ascertaining the status of children's/students' self-esteem") and No. 6 ("I think children with developmental disabilities have lower self-esteem than their fellow students"), had a factor loading of less than 0.40 and were hard to interpret, so these questions were eliminated.

Individual factors were designated as follows. In terms of the specific status of support provided so as not to diminish the self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities, Factor 1 had high loadings for support recognizing students' efforts, support that encouraged children to take part in class, support that encouraged children, and experiencing accomplishment, so this factor was designated "providing positive experiences." Factor 2 referred to preventing situations like unwarranted attention and scolding, a sense of being unable to do what others can, and experiencing failure, so this factor was designated "avoiding negative experiences." Factor 3 had high loadings for the need for classes with activities that enhance self-esteem, the need to enhance self-esteem in order to avoid secondary symptoms, and improved self-esteem in educational settings, so this factor was designated "the need for support in educational settings."

In order to examine internal consistency, Cronbach's α was calculated for each factor. Cronbach's α was .81 for "providing positive experiences," .77 for "avoiding negative experiences," and .62 for "the need for support in educational settings." Thus, internal consistency was evident to an extent.

Relationship between individual factors and self-esteem

Scores were calculated in order to determine if there were significant differences in the self-esteem scores of elementary school teachers and middle school teachers. Elementary school teachers had an average self-esteem score of 3.50 points (0.68) while middle school teachers had an average self-esteem score of 3.51 points (0.57). A t-test of the two indicated that there were no significant differences ($t\text{-test}(912) = 0.08, p > .05$). There were no significant differences in the self-esteem scores of elementary school teachers and middle school teachers, so scores of both were included in subsequent analysis of the relationship between individual factors and self-esteem.

Table 1 Factor analysis of questionnaire results

No.	Questions	Factor No. 1	Factor No. 2	Factor No. 3
15	So as not to diminish the self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities, I provide support that recognizes the efforts of those children.	<u>0.770</u>	0.253	0.208
14	So as not to diminish the self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities, I provide, to the extent possible, support so that those children play a role in and take part in class.	<u>0.639</u>	0.141	0.133
13	So as not to diminish the self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities, I provide, to the extent possible, support that encourages those children.	<u>0.622</u>	0.348	0.206
12	So as not to diminish the self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities, I provide, to the extent possible, support so that those children can experience accomplishment.	<u>0.612</u>	0.317	0.135
11	So as not to diminish the self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities, I provide, to the extent possible, support to discourage other children from making fun of those with developmental disabilities.	<u>0.411</u>	0.269	0.169
9	So as not to diminish the self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities, I use tricks and take steps, to the extent possible, to avoid concentrating excessively on and reprimanding those children.	0.266	<u>0.674</u>	0.196
10	So as not to diminish the self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities, I use tricks and take steps, to the extent possible, to avoid creating situations where those children will feel unable to do something their classmates can do.	0.274	<u>0.617</u>	0.179
8	So as not to diminish the self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities, I use tricks and take steps, to the extent possible, to keep those children from repeatedly experiencing failure.	0.316	<u>0.573</u>	0.208
4	I am able to routinely interact with children/students without harming their self-esteem.	0.303	<u>0.456</u>	0.170
3	I think classes with activities that enhance the self-esteem of children/students are needed.	0.024	0.063	<u>0.631</u>
7	The self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities must not be diminished; otherwise, secondary symptoms could develop.	0.098	0.092	<u>0.499</u>
5	I have been able to improve the self-esteem of children/students in educational settings.	0.236	0.152	<u>0.460</u>
1	I routinely think about the self-esteem of children/students.	0.311	0.300	<u>0.401</u>
Squared sum of factor loadings		2.444	1.882	1.341
Factor contribution ratio (%)		16.30%	12.55%	8.94%

Subjects were divided into those with high self-esteem scores and those with low self-esteem scores in order to analyze the relationship between individual factors and self-esteem. Average scores on individual scales were calculated for the 2 groups, i.e. those with high self-esteem scores and those with low self-esteem scores. Results are as shown in Table 2. A t-test indicated that those with high self-esteem had significantly higher scores than those with low self-esteem in terms of “providing positive experiences” (t-test (914) = 6.93, $p < .01$), “avoiding negative experiences” (t-test (914) = 6.53, $p < .01$), and “the need for support in educational settings” (t-test (914) = 6.13, $p < .01$). Thus, results revealed that teachers with higher self-esteem had a greater recognition of the need for support in enhancing the self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities and those teachers viewed themselves as actually providing that support. This agrees with the findings of a previous study (Lawrence, 2008) indicating that teachers who lack self-esteem will have difficulty enhancing the self-esteem of the children they are responsible for. In addition, a teacher's diminished self-esteem has been noted to harm the teacher's mental health and substantially affect the teacher's guidance of and assistance to students (Tamura & Ishikuma, 2002). Thus, the self-esteem of teachers themselves must remain somewhat high so that they are sufficiently aware of self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities and actually seek to provide that support.

Table2 Average scores on individual scales with self-esteem

	providing positive experiences		avoiding negative experiences		the need for support in educational settings	
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
high self-esteem	4.16	(0.56)	3.81	(0.60)	4.35	(0.52)
low self-esteem	3.91	(0.55)	3.56	(0.57)	4.13	(0.55)

Relationship between factors and room assignment

Subjects were divided into elementary school teachers and middle school teachers and differences in their individual room assignments were examined. Average scores on each scale were calculated for all 3 types of elementary school teachers, i.e. regular classroom teachers, special needs teachers, and resource room teachers. Results are as shown in Table 3. Analysis of variance for each factor revealed significant differences between the 3 groups in terms of “providing positive experiences” ($F(2,724) = 19.59, p < .01$). Results of multiple comparisons using the LSD indicated that special needs teachers had significantly higher scores than regular classroom teachers. Analysis of variance revealed significant differences in terms of “avoiding negative experiences” ($F(2,724) = 19.17, p < .01$). Results of multiple comparisons using the LSD indicated that resource room teachers had the highest scores, followed by special needs teachers and then regular classroom teachers. Analysis of variance revealed significant differences in terms of “the need for support in educational settings” ($F(2,724) = 18.52, p < .01$). Results of multiple comparisons using the LSD indicated that

resource room teachers had the highest scores, followed by special needs teachers and then regular classroom teachers.

Average scores on each scale were calculated for both types of middle school teachers, i.e. regular classroom teachers and special needs teachers. Results are as shown in Table 3.

Table3 Average scores on each scale in room assignment

	providing positive experiences		avoiding negative experiences		the need for support in educational settings	
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
elementary school						
regular classroom teachers	3.99	(0.55)	3.62	(0.59)	4.20	(0.53)
special needs teachers	4.31	(0.52)	3.87	(0.64)	4.41	(0.58)
resource room teachers	4.23	(0.42)	4.26	(0.48)	4.78	(0.26)
middle school						
regular classroom teachers	3.78	(0.50)	3.52	(0.52)	4.09	(0.56)
special needs teachers	4.28	(0.37)	3.91	(0.55)	4.41	(0.45)

Among middle school teachers, there were significant differences in terms of “providing positive experiences” (t -test (185) = 7.14, $p < .01$). Special needs teachers had significantly higher scores than regular classroom teachers. There were significant differences in terms of “avoiding negative experiences” (t -test (185) = 4.89, $p < .01$). Special needs teachers had significantly higher scores than regular classroom teachers. There were significant differences in terms of “the need for support in educational settings” (t -test (185) = 3.89, $p < .01$). Special needs teachers had significantly higher scores than regular classroom teachers.

General trends for both elementary and middle school teachers were that teachers who most often interact directly with children with developmental disabilities, i.e. special needs teachers and resource room teachers, had greater recognition of the need for support in enhancing self-esteem than did regular classroom teachers. Special needs teachers and resource room teachers felt that they actually provided that support. Differences in classroom assignments are one factor that is thought to affect the self-esteem of children with developmental disabilities (Kojima, 2004), and yet the current study revealed that a teacher's room assignment can lead to differences in self-esteem support for children with developmental disabilities.

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