Self-Esteem Among Potential Greek Members: A Pre-Post Design

By

Lauren Elizabeth Chapman

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Approved:

Joan B. Hirt, Chairperson

Edward F. D. Spencer  Steven M. Janosik

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(Abstract)

Mental health is an important part of college students’ educational experiences, and more students and administrators are paying attention to mental health issues (Cooper, 2000; Kitzrow, 2003). Self-esteem is a concept central to mental health (Kittleson, 1989), and can be attributed to the social situations found in college settings, especially those that deal with rejection (Bednar, Wells, & Peterson, 1989; Caunt, 2003; Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004; Steffenhagen & Burns, 1987). Sorority recruitment is an event that can include rejection (National Panhellenic Conference, n.d.), and thus may negatively affect self-esteem.

The purpose of this study was to determine how recruitment affects the self-esteem of participants in two ways. First, this study sought to determine if self-esteem changes during recruitment for two groups of Potential Members (PMs): those who complete recruitment (persistent PMs) and those who withdraw from the recruitment process (withdrawn PMs). Second, this study investigated how self-esteem differed at the start and the end of recruitment between these groups of PMs.

The target sample included approximately 600 potential sorority members at a large, land-grant institution in a mid-Atlantic state. Data were collected by administering the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES) (Rosenberg, 1979) twice in a two-week period: once before recruitment began, and again when the PM either withdrew from recruitment or completed the recruitment process.

The results of the study indicate that there is a significant change in the self-esteem of PMs during recruitment. The persistent PMs experienced a significant increase in self-esteem,
while the withdrawn PMs experienced a significant drop in self-esteem. Also, there was a significant difference between the self-esteem levels of the two groups at the start of recruitment; the withdrawn PMs had a significantly higher level of self-esteem than the persistent PM group, though there was no difference in self-esteem between the two groups at the end of the recruitment process.
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