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Longitudinal Relationships of Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy in the Teaching Profession With Aspirations to Become a Teacher: A Four-Year Study of University Students in Teacher Education Programs

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Abstract

School education in Japan has recently faced various challenges. Both the number of children experiencing psychological and behavioral problems, including bullying and school refusal, and the number of teachers taking sick leave have increased. In this context, the number of candidates for teaching positions has declined, alongside a decrease in aspirations to enter the teaching profession. Previous studies have identified various factors associated with teaching career aspirations among university students enrolled in teacher education programs. The present study examined the longitudinal relationships of self-esteem and self-efficacy in the teaching profession with aspiration to become a teacher. A final sample of 90 university students was followed longitudinally from their first through fourth year. Self-esteem and self-efficacy in the teaching profession were assessed with reliable and validated questionnaires (Yamasaki & Uchida, 2023, 2024), whereas aspirations to become a teacher were rated on a seven-point Likert scale. The primary analysis employed a cross-lagged panel model. Scores on all three variables decreased from the first to the third year and increased in the fourth year. This increase may have been associated with teaching practicum experiences after the third year. The cross-lagged panel analysis indicated a longitudinal pathway from self-efficacy in the teaching profession to self-esteem in the teaching profession, which in turn predicted aspirations to become a teacher. These findings highlight the importance of fostering both self-efficacy and self-esteem in the teaching profession during university teacher education. Limitations concerning sample size and generalizability are also discussed.

Keywords: aspirations to become a teacher; self-esteem in the teaching profession; self-efficacy in the

teaching profession; university students in teacher education programs