

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON SELF-ESTEEM ACROSS PERSONAL VARIABLES

SUNITA & PINKI RANI

Research Scholar, Department of Human Development and Family Studies I.C. Collage of Home Science,
CCS HAU, Hisar, Haryana, India

ABSTRACT

Self-esteem can be defined as an individual's attitude about him or herself, involving self-evaluation along a positive- negative dimension. Most generally self-esteem refers to an individual's over all positive evaluation to the self. The study was conducted in Hisar District of Haryana state. All the adolescents studying in 9th and 10th standard falling in the age group 15 – 16 years were included in the sample for the study. Self-esteem was taken as dependent variable. Self-Esteem was assessed by Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) by Rosenberg's (1989). Independent variable was personal variables which included adolescent personal variables. Result revealed that significant difference was found in self- esteem scores when compared against sex. Females scored significantly higher mean scores against males with regard to self-esteem. This means that females tend to have higher self- esteem and had more positive assessments of their physical characteristics and intellectual abilities than boys have. Surprisingly non-significant differences were obtained in self-esteem mean scores when compared against residential area and academic class. This reflects that residential area and academic class make no significant differences in the scores of self-esteem of adolescents. Result further reflects that significant differences in self-esteem of adolescents across different categories of academic achievement.

KEYWORDS: Adolescents, self-esteem, positive evaluation, academic achievement and Parental relationship

INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem as the experience of capable of meeting life challenge and being worthy of happiness. Self esteem continues to be one of the most commonly research concept in social psychology (Baumeister, 1993). Teachers, administrators and parents are commonly concerned about student's self-esteem. Its significance is often exaggerated to the extent that low self-esteem is viewed as the cause of all evil and high self-esteem as the cause of all good (Manning et al., 2006). Self-esteem is associated with depression, anxiety, motivation and general satisfaction with one's life (Rosenberg, 1986).

Self-esteem can be defined as an individual's attitude about him or herself, involving self-evaluation along a positive- negative dimension (Baron and Byrne, 1991). Most generally self-esteem refers to an individual's overall positive evaluation to the self (Rosenberg et al., 1995). Reasoner (2005) has defined self-esteem as the experience of capable of meeting life challenge and being worthy of happiness. In today's world self-esteem has been viewed as an important tool to face the competitive life. Modern living has brought with it, not only innumerable means of comfort, but also a plethora of demands that tax human body and mind. Now a day's everyone talks about stress. It is cutting across all socioeconomic groups of population and becomes the great leveler and continuous stress over a period of time takes the form of depression.

Since its origin, attachment research has focused primarily on the study of attachment bonds in early childhood (Bowlby, 1982). Lately, however, attachment has been re-conceptualized to include other significant relationships, such as those with peers. From an attachment perspective, adolescence is marked by critical changes in cognitive, behavioral, and emotional systems. Adolescents develop their own points of view and separate them from their parents (Bowlby, 1982). Further, the transition to adolescence implies a modification in the familial balance between connectedness and autonomy. Indeed, during this developmental phase, adolescents search greater independence and autonomy from their parents.

Parental relationship plays a very important role in determining high self-esteem of students. The security of the attachment relationship provides the basis for the child's development of independence in conflicts and depression (Allen and Hauser, 1996). Adolescence is understood as a time of increased autonomy and experimentation; a time when peer relationships become increasingly important, and when the risk of engaging in potentially harmful behaviors becomes a salient area of concern (Laible et al., 2004). Throughout this period of development, parent-child relationships change in many important ways. From the outside, it can be seen as though adolescents and their parents become less close during this time. However, from the perspective of attachment theory, relationships with attachment figures remain one of the most influential factors in nearly every aspect of a person's life into adolescence and beyond. During adolescence, the primary task of separation-individuation occurs, mirroring the differentiation of the individual self-concept during the first year of life, and the success of which heavily depends upon the security of the attachment relationship up until the adolescent years. This process has implications for the adolescent's self-esteem (Laible et al., 2004).

Self-esteem is intertwined and contributes to negative effects. There are theoretical reasons to believe that self-esteem might be particularly strongly linked during adolescence and young adulthood. The confluences of changes that occur during this developmental stage are likely to tax the individual's psychological resources, and previous research has suggested that the link between self-esteem and depression might be stronger during stressful events.

Moreover, one of the core developmental tasks of this stage of life centers on developing a sense of mastery and competence (Galambos et al., 2006), which are closely linked to self-esteem. Thus, it seems plausible that all aspects of adjustment and adaptation, including indicators of well being such as depression, would be particularly linked to success in achieving the salient developmental task of this period, establishing a sense of competence and self-worth. Research conducted in the Indian context suggests that socio-emotional problems like attachment difficulties with parents and interpersonal conflicts with peers are relatively common in adolescence, and may contribute to impaired feelings of self-esteem. Thus the present study was carried out with the following objectives.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess the extent of self – esteem among adolescents.
- To study the effects of personal variables on self–esteem.

METHODOLOGY

The study was planned to investigate levels of Self-Esteem among adolescents living in rural and urban areas. To understand the features of adolescents, comparative rural and urban area study is an essential tool. As per objectives, the study was conducted in Hisar district of Haryana state purposefully selected due to easy accessibility. To draw the rural

sample, list of villages having Government schools with 9th and 10th classes was obtained from the Education Department, Hisar. Out of the list, three villages namely Neoli Kala, Behbalpur and Mongolia were randomly selected and Government Senior Secondary Schools of these villages were taken to draw the rural sample. Whereas, to draw urban sample Government Girls Senior Secondary School, Hisar and Government Senior Secondary School, Hisar (Patel Nagar) were randomly selected. All the adolescents studying in 9th and 10th standard falling in the age group 15 – 16 years were included in the sample for the study.

A variable is a set of value that forms a classification. A value is anything which can be predicted. For the present study, the variables have been grouped into two types the dependent and independent variables. A dependent variable is a variable presumed to be affected by one or more independent variables. Self-esteem was taken as the dependent variable. Self-esteem was assessed by Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) by Rosenberg's (1989). An independent variable is a variable presumed to affect or influence other variables. The independent variable was personal variables which included adolescent personal variables.

RESULTS

Comparison of Self-Esteem across Personal Variables of Respondents

Table 1 shows a comparison of self – esteem scores of adolescents against their personal variables. A statistically significant difference was found in self- esteem scores when compared against sex, i.e. $z=3.25$, $p<0.05$. Females scored significantly higher mean scores ($M = 18.78$) against males ($M=17.09$) with regard to self-esteem. This means that females tend to have higher self- esteem and had more positive assessments of their physical characteristics and intellectual abilities than boys have. Surprisingly non-significant differences were obtained in self–esteem means scores when compared against residential area ($z= 0.07$, $p<0.05$) and academic class ($z=1.56$, $p<0.05$). This reflects that residential area and academic class make no significant differences in the scores of self–esteem of adolescents.

When self-esteem scores of adolescents belonging to different ordinal positions were compared using one way ANOVA test, non-significant difference was obtained reflecting that the ordinal position did not make differences in the level of self-esteem. Yet from the mean scores it can be concluded that as the birth order increases, self-esteem also increases and younger children in family have relatively higher self-esteem.

Further table revealed statistically significant differences in self-esteem of adolescents across different categories of academic achievement, the $F_{(2,287)}$ value = 3.40, $p<0.05$. Mean scores revealed that adolescents who were average ($M=17.78$) academic performers had high self-esteem and they were significantly different from the adolescents who were good at ($M=19.83$) academic achievement. But non-significant differences were observed between adolescents having poor and average academic achievement and poor and good academic performance.

Table 1: Comparison of Self-Esteem across Personal Variables of Respondents

Sr. No.	Personal variables				
1.	Gender				
	Male Mean \pm S.D.		Female Mean \pm S.D.		Z-value
	17.9 \pm 4.56		18.78 \pm 4.20		3.25*
2.	Residential area				
	Rural Mean \pm S.D.		Urban Mean \pm S.D.		
	18.07 \pm 4.57		18.11 \pm 4.05		0.07
3.	Academic class				
	9 th Mean \pm S.D.		10 th Mean \pm S.D.		
	17.63 \pm 4.44		18.45 \pm 4.40		1.56
4.	Ordinal position				
	1 st born Mean \pm S.D.	2 nd born Mean \pm S.D.	3 rd born Mean \pm S. D.	4 th born Mean \pm S. D.	F-value
	18.09 ^a \pm 4. 28	17.71 ^a \pm 4. 71	18.12 ^a \pm 4. 41	19.33 ^a \pm 4. 07	0.75
5.	Academic achievement				
	Poor (<50%) Mean \pm S.D.		Average (>50-70%) Mean \pm S. D.		Good (>70%) Mean \pm S.D.
	18.24 ^{ab} \pm 5. 39		17.78 ^a \pm 4. 30		19.83 ^b \pm 4.08

Note: Means in the same row that do not share superscripts differ at $p < 0.05$ using Duncan multiple different comparison

DISCUSSIONS

Self-esteem, which involves evaluating how one feels about one's self concept in terms of abilities, capabilities, strength and his position among others. It develops uniquely for each adolescent and there are many different trajectories of self-esteem possible over the course of adolescence. The present investigation revealed that the majority of adolescents had normal levels of self-esteem. The results get strength from the finding of Dhal et al. (2007) who also reported 87% adolescents having high self-esteem. Previous researches indicate that gender can affect changes in self-esteem during early adolescence. Girls consistently experience a sharper decline in their levels of self-esteem (Du Bois et al., 2002). The present study, however revealed the contrast results as girls possessed superior self-esteem against the boys and the differences were statistically significant. The findings are in line with the study of Rhodes et al. (2004). Further the reason for urban adolescents having superior self-esteem against rural children can be attributed to the facts that in the present study urban adolescents had better communication with parents and peers which lead to superior self-esteem. The correlational results further indicated that gender, academic achievement, parent-peer attachment were protective factors for self-esteem as these were positively and significantly, correlated with self-esteem. Gender alone was the highest significant contributor to self-esteem (39%). The role of gender and academic achievement in self-esteem get strength from the results reported by Uba et al. (2010) who found a strong positive relationship of these with self-esteem.

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