A Study of Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement among Girl Students of Mysore City

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Abstract

The present study has attempted to investigate the relationship between Self-esteem and Academic Achievement among girl students in Mysore city of Karnataka. The subjects were 1035 girls representing four geographical areas the North, South, West, and East of Mysore city. They were either 14 or 16 years old. The response on the measure of Self-esteem was assessed using Self-Esteem Inventory, (CSI) of Cooper smith, (1975/1981). The level of self-esteem and academic achievement among two groups revealed that there are significant differences among girl students’ with high level of self-esteem and girl students’ with low level of self-esteem on their academic achievement in favor of students with high self-esteem. The results also revealed that there is no significant difference between two age groups in term of self-esteem.

KEYWORDS: Self-Esteem, Self-Esteem Inventory, Academic Achievement.

Self-esteem is a widely used concept in popular language and in psychology, having been first coined by American psychologist and philosopher William James in 1890. (Rodewalt, F & Tragakis, M.W. 2003).

Self – esteem is the degree to which one values oneself. Note that although the word esteem carries the connotation of high worth or value, the combined form, self-esteem refers to the full dimension and the degree of self-esteem high or low is usually specified. (Reber, A.S. 1985).

Self-esteem involves both self-relevant belief “e.g., I am competent / incompetent” and associated self-relevant emotions “e.g., triumph / despair, pride / shame”. It also finds expression in behavior “e.g., assertiveness / Timorousness, confidence/caution). In addition, self-esteem can be constructed as an enduring personality characteristic (Trait self-esteem) or as a temporary psychological condition (State self-esteem). Finally, self-esteem can be specific to a particular dimension (e.g., “I believe I am a good writer, and feel proud of that in particular”) or global in extent (e.g., I believe I am a good person, and feel proud of myself in general”) (Wikipedia, 2006).

Self-esteem includes the following primary properties according to Branden, (1969).
1. It is a basic human need i.e. “………..It makes an essential contribution to the life process”, “………is indispensable to normal and healthy self - development and has a value for survival.”

2. For Branden, self-esteem is an automatic and inevitable consequence of the sum of an individual’s choice in using their consciousness.

3. He states that self-esteem is experienced as a part of or background to all of individual’s thoughts, feelings and actions.

High self-esteem has been linked with healthy behaviors such as not smoking greater involvement in sports and exercise, and healthy eating patterns, particularly among adolescents and increased compliance with medicine regimes and fewer health problems (Litt, Cuskey & Rosenberg, 1982, Rivas & Fernandez, 1995, Khurram, 2009).

By contrast, low self-esteem has been associated with mental illness, physical illness and absence of mental well-being (Mruk, 1995, Killen, 1993).

According to McDaniel, (1986) helping children to “feel good about themselves”, is frequently listed as an important goal of early education, for example, the National Association of Elementary School Principals listed the development of “a positive self-image” first among the characteristic of a good quality, early childhood program. One newsletter for teachers quotes a statement that, “the basis for everything we do is self-esteem. Therefore, if we can do something to give children a strong sense of themselves, starting in preschool, they will be (a lot wiser) in the choices they make”.

**Definition of Self-Esteem:**

Various perspectives on self-esteem exist, but those proposed by Rosenberg and Coopersmith have been most well known. For the purpose of the current study, self-esteem will be viewed from Coopersmith’s perspective. The term Self-Esteem is defined as: An expression of approval or disapproval (of) the extent that a person believes himself or herself competent, successful, significant and worthy. (Coopersmith, 1981, pp.1-2).

This perspective focuses on the evaluation that the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to him/her. In addition, indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself/herself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy.

**Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement**

During the last decade numerous studies have been conducted with the aim of finding predictors of an effective school measured in terms of the average level of the students’ academic achievement.

Self-esteem is an extremely popular construct within psychology and has been related to almost every other psychological concept of field, including personality, health and health-related behaviors, clinical psychology and social psychology. The construct is also widely used in educational psychology.
It has been suggested that high self-esteem can lead to better health and social behavior, and that poor self-esteem is associated with a broad range of mental disorders and social problems, both internalizing problems (e.g. depression, suicidal tendencies and anxiety) and externalizing problems (e.g. violence and substance abuse). (Mann, et al., 2004).

Self-esteem entails competence, confidence, mastery, independent, freedom and achievement. In the professional literature, the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement has been well documented. There are two perspectives about relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. According to the first perspective, Self-esteem is powerfully influenced by results achieved and appreciation shown by others from primary school on. It is also a good predictor of academic success. Educational Achievement and self-esteem seem to be highly interrelated and one influences the other, nonetheless, the foundation for academic achievement seems to be positive self-esteem, which has to be cultivated early in life. Low self-esteem is often cited as the ultimate source of poor academic achievement and self-destructive behavior. This in one way or another affects the personal growth of the person as well as his/her role and status in the society at large. The type of self-esteem the child withholds is by and large dependent on his /her surrounding, particularly, the type of early childhood upbringing, early school experiences. Peer relationship too is found to play a vital role in molding a child’s self-esteem (Maslow, 2006).

According to Panda(2007), research on correlates of academic achievement is fairly extensive, developmental and trait-oriented, but replicate western studies, constitute post-facto analyses and are curriculum-oriented. In the field of school learning, personality factors are quite significantly influential. Personality factors were in fact late being recognized compared to cognitive factors determining achievement and related behavior.

Adequate self-esteem is related to the capacity to cope with academic tasks by employing effective study methods and actively participating in the learning process, both of which are involved in achieving set goals. In summary a significant correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement was found by Bledsoe, (1964); Frerichs, (1971); Gordon, (1977); Rubin, (1978); Skaalvik, (1983); Leonardson, (1986); Tremblay, Inman, and Williams, (2000); Alves, Peixoto, et al. (2002); Pepi, Faria, and Alesi, (2006).

Apparently, high self-esteem is a state of mind that can potentially boost individual’s feeling of self-worth, thus providing the impetus for achievement and life satisfaction. A great deal of the literature argues that having high self-esteem seems to be a key to academic achievement, psychological well being and other positive outcomes in people’s lives (Baumeister et al., 2003; Hewitt, 1998; Guindon, 2002; Zeigler-Hill, 2006). With respect to academic achievement, various studies indicate that children with low self-esteem are less successful at school (Mann, et al., 2004). There exists evidence that suggests that when people feel good about themselves they are more willing to try different ventures and feel confident about succeeding in them.
In summary these researches have one result about correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement and that is:

a. Self-esteem and academic achievement are positively correlated.

b. It therefore makes sense to try to raise student’s self-esteem if we want them to perform better.

The second perspective advocates that self-esteem and academic performance have little or no relationship (Rosenberg, et al., 1989; Alsaker, 1989; Skaalvik, & Hagtvet, 1990; Satapathy, (2000); Ross, & Broh, 2000; Baumister, et al., 2003; Laar, 2004).

Demo, (Anastasi, & Urbina, 1997) holds the view that under certain circumstances, the use of a single, global self-esteem measure may yield inconsistent results or fail to reveal significant correlations with other variables, whereas a more narrowly defined construct, such as academic self-concept, will yield consistent and significant results.

Kohn, (1994) views that a causal relationship must be demonstrated. Unfortunately, it turns out to be even more difficult to defend the idea that self-esteem produces academic achievement than it is to defend a robust correlation between the two. The late Morris Rosenberg, for many years a leading figure in the self-esteem field, and his colleagues wrote in 1989 that "global self-esteem appears to have little or no effect in enhancing academic performance." Other researchers have echoed this conclusion: one huge study of high school students found "no significant causal relation," a review of the literature turned up "overwhelmingly negative evidence. For a causal connection and an even more recent review concurred that there is "little if any evidence that children's academic performance is causally determined by their global self-concept."

According to Baumeister, (Criag, 2006) there is a very weak link between academic performance and self-esteem. This conclusion is amply demonstrated in unpublished research into the 1970 British cohort study reported by Nicholas Elmer. For example the highest achieving students in American schools’ white girls often get the lowest self-esteem scores. This is also true of Asian students. Asian culture does not encourage self-esteem yet young Asians often excel academically. In the U.S. the groups who consistently score high on self-esteem are black boys and they often achieve the least academically at school.

Baumeister et.al, (2003) also argue that any attempt to artificially boost self-esteem for young people may backfire. He explains why in his 2003 paper:

“……..Student may ordinarily work hard in order to be permitted to feel good about themselves, and an intervention that encourages them. To feel good about them regardless of work may remove the reason to work hard-resulting in poor performance.”

If self-esteem doesn't cause higher achievement, and if there is some kind of connection between the two, what exactly is the nature of the relationship? The answer
you get depends on the researchers you ask. Some say that self-esteem and achievement are causally related, all right, but that the latter causes the former more than the other way around. That is, students feel good about themselves because they do well rather than do well because they feel good about themselves.

A good deal more research to understand fully the relation between Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement is needed.

**Research Questions**: The following two research questions are raised and answered through the present study.

(a) Has self-esteem got anything to do with academic achievement?
(b) Does age influence self-esteem?

In order to answer the two research questions, the following two objectives are developed.

**Objectives**
The present study of Self-Esteem in relation to academic achievement has focused on the following objectives:

1. To study the level of self-esteem in relation to academic achievement among high school girl students.
2. To study the differences between girl students of 14 years and 16 years on their level of Self-Esteem.

**Hypotheses**
The present study has two hypotheses which are as follows.

1. There is no significant relationship between the level of self-esteem and academic achievement among high school girl students.
2. There is no significant difference between students of 14 years and 16 years on their level of Self-Esteem.

**Methodology**
The sample of the study comprised 1035 high school girl students who are 14 years and 16 years old studying in Mysore city of Karnataka. They have been drawn using stratified random sampling method. The study has used Self-Esteem Inventory, (CSI) developed by Coopersmith, (1975/1981), and a personal data sheet.

**Results and Discussion**
The collected data were tabulated and subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics.

**Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the level of self-esteem and academic achievement among high school girl students.**

In order to test the above hypothesis, the collected data were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics. Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of sample group.
Table 1. The Direction and Extent of Correlation between Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
<th>Inference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self esteem &amp; Academic Achievement</td>
<td>1035</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To test the above hypothesis, the scores on self-esteem, area wise as well as the total scores and academic achievement (total scores in annual exam) of all students of the sample have been pooled and subjected to Pearson Correlation.

The mean score of academic achievement was 394.53 and other measures of central tendency, i.e., median and mode are found to be 394.00 and 442 respectively, which are close to the mean. The Standard Deviation is found to be 111.014.

It is seen that the entire sample has been distributed from 1 to 24 marks on a test of maximum 25 marks. The mean is found to be (15.67), while the median and the mode are (16.00) and (17). The Standard Deviation is found to be (3.155).

An analysis of the table 1 indicates that the correlation between Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement has been found to be .083, which is found to be highly significant at 0.01 level. Hence, the two variables are highly significantly and positively correlated. It means that As the Self-Esteem increases, academic achievement also increases and as the Self-Esteem decreases, academic achievement also decreases. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

There are two perspectives about relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. The finding of present study matches with the first perspective about relation between self-esteem and academic achievement, According to the first perspective, Self-esteem is powerfully influenced by results achieved and appreciation shown by others from primary school on. It is also a good predictor of academic success. Educational Achievement and self-esteem seem to be highly interrelated and one influences the other. Nonetheless, the foundation for academic achievement seems to be positive self-esteem, which has to be cultivated early in life. Low self-esteem is often cited as the ultimate source of poor academic achievement and self-destructive behavior. This, in one way or another it affects the personal growth of the person as well as his/her role and status in the society at large. The type of self-esteem the child holds is by and large dependent on his/her surroundings. Particularly, the type of early childhood
upbringing, early school experiences and peer relationship play a vital role in molding the child's self-esteem.

Adequate self-esteem is related to the capacity to cope with academic tasks by employing effective study methods and actively participating in the learning process, both of which are involved in achieving set goals. In summary a significant correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement was found by Bledsoe, (1964); Frerichs, (1971); Gordon, (1977); Rubin, (1978); Skaalvik, (1983); Leonardson, (1986); Tremblay; Inman, and Williams, (2000); Alves,; Peixoto, et al., (2002); Pepi, Faria,; and Alesi, (2006).

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between students of 14 years and 16 years on their level of Self-Esteem.

In order to test the above hypothesis, the scores of the sample of 14 years and 16 years on their level of Self-Esteem were enumerated, tabulated and further subjected to t test. The results obtained are as follows.

Table 2- the scores of level of Self-Esteem between 14 years and 16 years (Between two groups)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from the above table that there are 53.4% of students on 14 years old group, and 46.6% of them on 16 years old group. This suggests that a majority of students are in the 14 years group.
To study whether the difference between the 14 year and 16 year old girls on Self-Esteem is statistically significant, the scores were subjected to t-value.

**Table 3- Difference between students of 14 years and 16 years on their level of Self-Esteem**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Inference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SELF-ESTEEM</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>15.65</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td></td>
<td>.233</td>
<td>.816</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>15.70</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1035</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To test the above hypothesis the scores of Self-Esteem Scale between two age groups of students (14 and 16 years old), are subjected to t-test. The above table clearly indicates that there are not significant mean differences between 14 and 16 years groups on their level of Self-Esteem. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, one can conclude that girls of 14 years and 16 years do not differ significantly on their level of Self-esteem. It means, the age and Self-esteem are unrelated.

**Conclusions:** On the basis of the results of the study, the following `conclusions can be drawn:

1. The Self-Esteem and academic achievement are significantly related. As the Self-Esteem increases, academic achievement increases but as the Self-Esteem decreases academic achievement also decreases.
2. Girl students of 14 years and 16 years do not differ significantly on their Self-Esteem. Therefore, the age and Self-Esteem are unrelated in the present study.

**References**


