Self Esteem among Rural Adolescent Girls in Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT The present study has been conducted with an aim to know the self-esteem of adolescent girls and the factors affecting in Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh. A total sample of 112 school going girls in the age range of 14 to 19 years were selected from five villages of Kangra district. Self esteem was measured through self esteem scale and the means and percentages were calculated. Results indicated that majority of the girls had average scores of self-esteem with an average of 83.56. Self-esteem scores were found to be positively correlated with the educational status of the girls. The analysis also revealed that the family type of girls affected the scores of self-esteem.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a concept encompassing physical and emotional stages of transition from childhood to adulthood. With the dramatic physical changes and development, adolescents worldwide find themselves in a situation characterized by an uncertain status and events might affect their concept of their own.

Self-esteem has been described as the judgments that we make about our own worth and the feeling associated with those judgments. It has been ranked as among the most important aspects of self-development since evaluation of our own competencies affect emotional experiences, future behaviour and long term psychological adjustment. A study by Donahue and Benson (1995) revealed that self-esteem has also been recognized as a predictor of social problems in the researches of psychological and social development.

According to Holly (1987), self-esteem is influenced by culture, child rearing practices, achievement-related attributions and interactions with parents and teachers. Adolescence, being the stage of turmoil, is one of the periods in life of children, when self esteem increases and is highly influenced by the environment. Women are conditioned to suffer low self esteem and inferior status. According to the Indian culture, the 'females' had been held in high esteem throughout the ages and have been worshipped. With changing times, gender perceptions are a societal construct, which are dependent upon socio-cultural practices in which the children, adult and youth grow up (NIHFW, 2005). Self-esteem is also viewed both as a personality trait and a psychological state. People have a typical level of self-esteem that is consistent across time. Studies by Yabiku et al. (1999), also found that children have higher self-esteem when their parents are loving, supportive and deeply involved in their lives. Self-esteem has also been found to have a direct correlation with quality and strength of parent-child relationships. Children from families with poor communication methods or dysfunctional families tend to have low self-esteem and trouble finding their own identity (Nunley, 1996). Even though one's self forms according to experiences and relationships with families, school, work, etc., it is really a person's perception of these experiences and relationships that have a greater impact on one's self esteem (Mecca et al., 1989).

The purpose of this study was to find out the levels of self-esteem of girls in their adolescent years of life in a rural setting. This study also endeavors to find the effect of various socio-economic factors on the levels of self esteem scores.

METHODOLOGY

A sample of 112 school going girls of age 14 to 19 years girls were selected from two blocks – Panchrukhi and Bhawarna of Kangra district of

Himachal Pradesh. Out of these two blocks a total of five villages were selected randomly. The girls were selected from government schools located within the villages and permission was taken from the principals of the schools for conducting the study.

The tools of the study including a modified socio economic status scale which consisted of general information – age, ordinal position, caste, family type and size, ordinal position, caste, family type and size, education and occupation of parents, income, etc. A self esteem scale constructed by Kapadia and Verma in 1989 was used to know the self-esteem if girls. This scale consisted of 41 statements out of which 15 were positive and 26 statements were negative. The categories of self esteem as given in the scale is as follows:

Self-esteem scores	Categorization
48 – 80	Low self esteem
81 – 106	Average self esteem
Above 106	High self esteem

The high schools and senior secondary schools located within the villages were selected out of which efforts were made to choose at least 20 girls between ages 14 to 19 years from each school. The girls were mainly from 9th, 10th and 11th standards. Each girl was contacted separately for information on various aspects. Different statistical measures were applied on the data obtained. Means and percentages were calculated. Correlation and chi-square tests were also applied on the data to obtain significant results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The background information of the sample is given in the Table 1. The results of the socio-economic status of girls revealed that majority of the sample were in age range of 14 to 15 years, lived in nuclear families (82.1%) and had small families (50%). An equal percentage of the girls (35.7%) were the first and second born in their families and majority of their parents were educated upto middle and high school. The income level of majority of the families was between Rs 1001/- to Rs 5000/- (53.57%).

Self-esteem is a person's judgments about one's own self, which includes positive and negative evaluation. Self-esteem can be low or high depending on the individual and the

Table 1: Socio economic status of girls

Socio-economic variables	Number	Percentage
Age		
14 to 15 years	68	60.7
16 to 17 years	41	36.6
18 to 19 years	3	2.7
Ordinal Position		
1	40	35.7
2	40	35.7
3	25	22.3
4	5	4.5
Above 4	2	1.8
Family Type		
Nuclear	92	82.1
Joint	20	17.9
Family Size		
Small (1 – 4)	56	50
Medium (5 – 7)	54	48.2
Large (Above 7)	2	1.8
Father's Education		
Illiterate	3	2.7
Upto primary	8	7.1
Middle + High school	61	54.4
College level	18	16.1
Graduate	10	8.9
Post graduate	7	6.2
Mother's Education		
Illiterate	18	16.1
Upto primary	25	22.3
Middle + High school	56	50
College level	9	8.0
Graduate	1	0.9
Post graduate	-	-
Income (Monthly)		
Less than Rs 1000/-	10	8.92
Rs 1000/- to Rs 5000/-	60	53.57
Rs 5000/- to Rs 10000/-	33	2.94
Above Rs 10000/-	9	8.03

environment. Pleasant feelings and enhanced initiatives are the two benefits of high self-esteem. The scores of the adolescent girls were mostly in the range of 81 to 106, which means they were in an average category, although about 33% of them had low self-esteem (Table 2). A positive correlation was found between self-esteem and family type and education of girls (Table 3), which means that girls living in nuclear families have a higher self-esteem. This also means that education seems to have an impact in the sense that more educated is the girl, more will be her judgment

Table 2: Scores of self-esteem of girls

Levels of scores	Number	Percentage
Less than 48 (Very Low)	2	1.8
48 to 80 (Low)	36	32.1
81 to 106 (Average)	73	65.1
More than 106 (High)	1	0.9

Mean = 83.45; SD = 12.77

Table 3: Correlation between self-esteem and other variables

Variables	Self esteem	Interpretation
Age	-0.013	Less age, more self esteem
Family size	-0.189	Less family size, more self esteem
Family type	0.134	More nuclear family, more self esteem
Education	0.213	More education, more self esteem

Table 4: Association between self-esteem and family type

Scores of self esteem	Family type		Total	Chi square value
	Nuclear	Joint		
Less than 48	1	1	2	17.70**
48 – 80	29	7	36	
81 – 106	70	3	73	
More than 106	1	-	1	
Total	91	11	112	

Note: **Highly significant at 1 percent level of significance

about self (higher self esteem). This is supported by a research done by Sachar et al (1997a) where a high degree of positive correlation was observed between the number of years spent in school and self esteem. Self-esteem is more likely the result than the cause of academic achievement and a certain level of self esteem is required in order for a student to achieve academic success (Holly, 1987). A significant relationship was found between self-concept and academic achievement (Brookover et al, 1985). Also two common characteristics found among dropout girls include low academic achievement and low self esteem (Kite, 1989 and Earle, 1987). Negative correlation was also found between self-esteem and age and family size in the present study. This emphasizes that as we grow old, because of maturity in thinking and expanding experiences, we try to evaluate ourselves in a rigid manner; the result is a lower self-esteem. This also can be due to failure to fulfill the expectations. Sachar et al (1997b) in their studies on self esteem and its correlates among adolescent girls found that majority of girls had medium self esteem and the self esteem scores were lower in older girls. The level of education, number of years spent in school and non formal training were found to be significant positive correlates of self esteem. A study by Crocker and Park (2003) found that people seek to maintain, protect and enhance self-esteem by attempting to obtain success and avoid failure in domains on which their self worth has been staked.

A clear cut highly significant relationship was found between self-esteem and the family type of girls (Table 4) meaning and whether the family is nuclear or joint, it does affect the self-evaluation of the individual. The results are supported by a study of James (1989) where he found that perceived family support by parents and self-esteem were significantly positively correlated. In a joint family because of high load of work and other duties of the adult members of the family, they might not give proper attribution to the

children, which could decrease their confidence building aptitude. Since most adolescents must spend time daily in their family environment it is one of the most fundamental and central environment in their lives. High family support provides adolescent with a sense of stability and security, which is very important during a time that can be very turbulent for some individual. This sense of stability and security allows them to have a positive self-perception.

Thus the study reflects and adds to the body of knowledge on the levels of self-esteem. It also highlights the factors that affect self-esteem during adolescent years. Gender perceptions are built during childhood and adolescence depending mainly on prevailing socio-cultural practices, which leads to lower self esteem among girls and they become used to the neglect and tolerate discrimination and justice. These types of customs and discriminatory social practices need to be changed urgently with active cooperation of the family, community and others. This will help to build self confidence and courage to resist pressure, discrimination and abuse. In relation to the results obtained, parents should be encouraged and motivated to provide their children with a large amount of support in order to raise their children's self esteem and lessen the likelihood that their children will be prey to the antisocial behaviour as it is well established through researches in past that behaviour as of depression, suicide and dropping out of school, all are associated with low self esteem.

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