

Gender Differences in Self-Esteem Among Adolescents in Aizawl City

Saichampuii Sailo*
Lallawmzuali**

Abstract

The present study focuses on self-esteem of 60 Mizo adolescents (30 male and 30 female) to see if there is any significant difference between the selected pairs in the variable mentioned. The sample was taken from higher secondary schools in Aizawl, Mizoram by applying simple random sampling method. After assurance was given about the confidentiality of the study result and about their personal information, self-esteem scale developed by Dr. Santosh Dhar & Dr. Upinder Dhar were administered. Appropriate statistical analysis is applied using SPSS for social sciences (SPSS-20) and result revealed the trustworthiness of the scale for measurement purposes in the project population; and significant differences in self-esteem of the participants with female showing higher self-esteem than male ($M = 83.6667$; $M = 78.2667$ respectively).

Keywords: *self-esteem, gender differences, adolescence.*

Introduction

The concept self-esteem has been a common household word and it cut across all age brackets, starting from infants to late adulthood. Who am I? What

*Ph.D; Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Pachhunga University College, Aizawl.

**VI Semester, Department of Psychology, Pachhunga University College, Aizawl. Corresponding Address: jilcs@yahoo.co.in

is my worth in life? What is my identity? What do I want to achieve? These are latent thought processes in humans. Therefore, self-esteem is the totality of one's self evaluation. It is a cognitive process of evaluating one's abilities, values, knowledge and overall capacity. People who are perceived with positive self-esteem demonstrated the following signs: confidence, self-direction, non-blaming others, demonstrates personal strength, optimism, ability to solve problems and ability to control emotions.

Attempts to define self-esteem have ranged from an emphasis on primitive libidinal impulses (Kernberg, 1975), to the perception that one is a valuable member of a meaningful universe (Solomon et al., 1991). Self-esteem functions as a sociometer that monitors whether an individual is being included or excluded and motivates an individual to engage in behaviors that minimize the probability of future rejection (Leary and Baumeister, 2000). Individual with high self-esteem possess sufficient motivation, skills and resources to enhance their self-worth following a threat. They tend to worry less about rejection and their high levels of self-confidence and self-certainty enable them to take social risks. Furthermore, high self-esteem individuals often demonstrate a greater desire to connect with close others to affirm their self-worth (Park and Maner, 2009). In contrast, low self-esteem individuals lack self-confidence and have more negative self views, believing that they have fewer positive qualities than high self-esteem individuals. Low self-esteem individuals do not react to threat by seeking affirmation; their self doubt causes them to adopt cautions i.e., self protective stance in their interaction with source of rejection (Anthony et al., 2007).

Since early adolescence is the period when girls enter puberty and experience major body changes, it is the most challenging period for girls (Holsen and colleagues, 2001). G. Stanley Hall (Arnett, 1999), a prominent psychologist, equated adolescence to 'storm and stress' because this particular stage of life is difficult and problematic. Offer and Offer (Arnett, 1999), further discussed this 'storm and stress' in terms of self-image. As individuals enter into a new stage of life, factors, challenges and experiences that accompany the stage are likely to influence their self-image. Individuals might re-evaluate themselves as they take part in and initiate new tasks and take on new responsibilities in which they can either be successful or miss the mark. These self-evaluations can affect their self-esteem. It is during these years that adolescents make an important transition – from middle school to high school. In their research Harter, Whitesell and Kowalski (Wigfield, Eccles, Iver, Reuman & Midgley, 1991) have shown that during this stage individuals tend to experience greater anxiety with regards to school and studies. Simmons, Rosenberg and Rosenberg (1973) further showed that once adolescents have moved to high school, their self-esteem is in general poorer than that of their juniors – who are still in elementary or junior school. In addition, they also observed that with the transition, their self-consciousness tends to increase.

In longitudinal study carried out over a span of seven years on adolescents moving from elementary and junior school to high school, it was noted that boys in general reported greater levels of self-esteem than their female counterparts (Wigfield, Eccles, Iver, Reuman, & Midgley, 1991). The results of another longitudinal

study by Brown et al., (2002) brought to light similar results, that is, the self-esteem of girls in particular was likely to decrease as they entered into the adolescent stage of life. Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling, & Potter (2002) reported parallel findings. According to their study, the self-esteem of both genders experiences a fall during the adolescent stage in life; however, this drop is twice as high for girls than for boys – i.e. the self-esteem of girls falls to a greater extent as compared to boys. On the other hand, the findings mentioned are in contrary to studies like Menon (2011) and Bartrum & Creed (2004) where girls are found to have higher self-esteem than boys.

Statement of the Problem

In the light of the conflicting literature and empirical observations, the first aim of the current study is to check the psychometric adequacy of the chosen variable as experiences of cross-cultural psychology suggest that the measures of theoretical constructs with proven psychometric adequacy for a given population may not be treated as reliable and valid measures for comparability unless preliminary checks are made (Berry, 1974; Eysenck & Eysenk, 1985; Witkin & Berry, 1975); and secondly, to explore the gender differences on the variable of self-esteem in young adolescents of the city of Aizawl, Mizoram. As previously stated, male and female adolescence are at risk of having either high self-esteem and low self-esteem. The difference in forming self-esteem as well as how the self-esteem affects the overall person differs between the genders. Female are known to score higher in the perspective of the test for the reliable performing task of their sociable activity and role played in the environmental activity.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were set forth for the conduct of the study

- (i) The measure of self-esteem would find replicability in the project population – the Mizo
- (ii) Significant gender difference will be observed on level of self-esteem among the participants.

Sample

Equal number of boys and girls (30 boys and 30 girls) from different schools of Aizawl, the capital city of Mizoram was selected as a sample for the present study. The age of the subjects ranges from 16 to 18 years and they are from low to high socio-economic status. In general, the subjects are known to have good mental and physiological health and not suffering from any serious or chronic ailments.

Psychological tool Used

The Self Esteem Scale (SES-DSDU: Dr. Santosh Dhar & Dr. Upinder Dhar, 2009) consists of 23 items/ statement. The test takes about 10 minutes. All the statements are to be answered in terms of strongly agree, disagree, not sure, agree or strongly agree. Each response is scored by awarding scores of 1,2,3,4 and 5 respectively. Higher the total score, higher the self-esteem, i.e., total score is the reflection of the overall self-esteem. The scale has a reliability of 0.87 and a validity of 0.93.

Procedure

The participants were contacted personally in their respective educational institution for data collection. After getting permission from the institution and the

willingness of the participants as congenial support was established to make them comfortable. They were provided the basic instructions for each test to make them understand how to perform. They were assured about the confidentiality of the data result. The test was administered by following the instruction specified in the manual. The general testing conditions were satisfactory, and the procedure was uniform for all the participants. All the tests were scored as per procedure described in the test manual for Self-Esteem Scale.

Results

Table-1

N	Valid	60
	Missing	0
Mean		80.9667
Std. Deviation		1.04476E1

Table-2

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	437.4	1	437.4	4.226	0.044
Within Groups	6002.533	58	103.492		
Total	6439.933	59			

Table-3

Sex	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
1	83.6667	30	9.60723
2	78.2667	30	10.70911
Total	80.9667	60	10.44756

Results when computed using Statistical Package for the Social Science -20 (SPSS-20) show Cronbach Alpha and split-half reliability to be quite high (0.721 and 0.76 respectively) showing the replicability of the chosen variable in the project population (hypothesis I); further, computation of Means, S.Ds, and Anova to elucidate the pattern of gender difference in the level of self-esteem between male and female participants shows significant difference in self-esteem between male and female higher secondary students (hypothesis II).

The item means scores (Table 3) of the self-esteem scale shows females to be higher in level of self-esteem as compared to males (M = 83.6667; SD = 9.60 and M = 78.2667; SD = 10.70 respectively).

Discussion

Self-esteem is one of the most basic psychological needs (Lai et.al, 2009). The variation between self-esteem changes between adolescence and childhood and self-esteem formed differently between male and female. Parents are an important part of the development of healthy self-esteem in a child as children are likely to identify with the same gender parents. Boys stereotypically are thought to have quicker rebounding egos, self-image and self-esteem than girls. Boys who are masculine and adhere to socially acceptable behavior for their gender have strong self-esteem and are accepted by their peer. Boys that have difficulty with self-esteem sometimes develop aggressive behavior and become disruptive. One study also found that substance abuse occurred more commonly with boys having low self-esteem.

Girls tend to be more social than boys and place more importance on social relationship than personal achievement when it comes to evaluating self-worth; this allows girls to develop ability to fewer relationship but, find the relationship they have to be more rewarding. On the other hand, girls are more highly effected by self-image and concerned about their appearance than boys. There is continuous pleasure for girls to adhere to a model image of what they should aspire to look like (Dawson, 2008). Adolescent females that have low self-esteem are more likely to engage in sexual acts for the purpose of seeking intimacy and as a result an improvement to their self-esteem. Low self-esteem in both girls and boys can have an effect in their health. It can lead to risky behavior such as early sexual exploration, drug abuse and violence. Adolescence choose their behavior to find acceptance within a peer group or to seek attention from other influential individuals in their lives whom they may depend upon for emotional reassurance (Lai et al. 2009).

A number of studies have explored this phenomenon and have found significant gender differences in adolescents with regard to self-esteem. Menon (2011) carried out a study on 350 adolescents and found significant gender differences with respect to friendship styles, self-esteem, self-concept and adjustments between girls and boys of England. Likewise, gender differences were found to be apparent with in adolescents with regards to self-esteem, shyness and sociability (Wadman, Durkin & Conti, 2008). In support of our studies, an Australian study carried out on 467 adolescents tapping self-esteem has a result similar to the present study and their study revealed

females to have higher self-esteem and career expectations than boys (Patton, Bartrum & Creed, 2004). Numerous researchers have examined, explored and discovered that males have lower self-esteem than the female adolescents (Benjet & Hernandez-Guzman, 2001). However, a study by Powel (2004) in contradiction shows that girls have more issues about self-esteem and self-concept due to which their psychosocial development is affected. This may lead to a later life depression and anxiety disorders. Mullis and Chapman (2000) in their study explored self-esteem and emotional regulation in young adolescents and observed gender factors to be associated with self-esteem scores. Similarly, a Mexican study investigated psychosocial well-being and self-esteem as one of the core variables on the sample of 1102 Mexican adolescent participants.

In summary, the result of the psychometric adequacy and significant differences in self-esteem of male and female higher secondary school students with female participants showing significantly higher level of self-esteem than males give us the replicability of the test in the population; and the prevailing trend about self-esteem per se and gender difference among the higher secondary students in Aizawl city. Meanwhile, in a research published by American Psychological Association, people worldwide tend to gain self-esteem as they grow older, and men generally have higher level of self-esteem than women, but this self-esteem gender gap is more pronounced in Western industrialized countries. Bleidorn and her colleagues in 2015 have also found culture to have a big influence in self-esteem development in men and women and that gender differences are usually small in many Asian countries

including India compared to larger in countries like the United Kingdom or the Netherlands.

References

- Anthony, D. B., Wood, Joanne V. & Holmes, John G. (2007). Testing Sociometer Theory: Self-Esteem and the Importance of Acceptance for Social Decision Making. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol 43(3), pp.425-32.
- Arnett, J. J. (1999) Adolescent Storm and Stress, Reconsidered. *American Psychologist*. May; Vol 54 (5): pp. 317-26.
- Benjet, C., & Hernandez-Guzman, L. (2001). Gender Differences in Psychological Well-Being of Mexican Early Adolescents. *Adolescence*, Vol 36, pp.47-65.
- Berry, J. W. (1974). Differentiation across cultures: cognitive style and affective style. In J. Dawson & W. Lonner (Eds.). *Readings in Cross-Cultural Psychology*. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, pp. 167-175.
- Bleidorn, W., Arslan, R., Denissen, J., Rentfrow, P., Gebauer, J., & Potter, J. (2016). Age and Gender Differences in Self-Esteem – A Cross-Cultural Window. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol III, No. 3, pp.396 - 410.
- Bukharil, R. S., Fatima, I, S., Amenah Rashid, A., & Saba, F. (2017). Emotional Intelligence and Self Esteem in Male and Female School Students. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Volume 4, Issue 2, No. 94.
- Dawson, G., (2008). Early Behavioral Intervention, Brain Plasticity and the Prevention Of Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Dev Psychopathol*. Summer; Vol 20(3), pp.775-803.

Senhri Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies Vol. II No.2 (July - December: 2017)

Dhar, S., & Dhar, U. (2009). Manual for Self-Esteem Scale.

Eysenk, H. J. & Eysenck, M. W. (1985). *Personality and Individual Differences: a natural science approach*. New York: Plenum.

Holsen, I., Kraft P., & Røysamb, E.(2001) The Relationship between Body Image and Depressed Mood in Adolescence: A 5-year Longitudinal Panel Study. *Journal of Health Psychology*. 2001 Dec; 6 (6), pp.613-27.

Kernberg, O. F. (1975). *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism*. New York: Aronson

Lai, Hsiang-Ru; Lu, Chang-Ming; Jwo, Jiunn-Chern. (2009). The Effects of a Self-Esteem Program Incorporated Into Health and Physical Education Classes. *Journal of Nursing Research*, Vol.17, No. 4, pp.233-240.

Leary, M. R. and Roy, F Baumeister (2000). The Nature and Function of Self-Esteem: Sociometer Theory. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol 32, pp. 1-62.San Diego: Academic Press.

Menon, M. (2011). Adolescence in High *Self-Esteem*, Narcissism was Associated with Higher Avoidant Attachment, October Vol. 15 (10), pp. 483-506.

Mullis, R. L, & Chapman (2000) Pological Age, Gender, and *Self-Esteem* Differences in Adolescent Coping Styles. *Journal of Social Psychology*, August Vol. 140(4), pp.539-41.

Park, L. E. & Maner, J. K. (2009). Does Self -Threat Promote Social Connection ? The Role of Self-Esteem and Contingencies of Self-Worth, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 96 (1), pp. 203-17.

Patton, W., Bartrum, D. A. & Creed, P. A. (2004). Gender differences for Optimism, Self-Esteem, Expectations and Goals in Predicting Career Planning and Exploration

Senhri Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies Vol. II No.2 (July - December: 2017)

Behaviours in Adolescents. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*. Vol 4, Issue 2-3, pp 193-209.

Powell, K. C. (2004). Developmental psychology of adolescent girls: Conflicts and identity issues. *Education*, Vol.125 (1), pp. 77-87.

Robins, R.W. (1), Trzesniewski, K.H., Tracy, J. L., Gosling, S. D, Potter. (2002). Global Self-Esteem across the Life Span. *Journal of Psychological Aging*, September Vol 17 (3), pp. 423-34.

Simmons, R.G., Rosenberg, F., & Rosenberg, M. (1973). Disturbance in the Self-Image at Adolescence. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 38, pp. 553-568.

Solomon, S., Greenberg, J., & Pyszczynski, T. (1991). A Terror Management Theory of Social Behavior: The Psychological functions of Self-Esteem and Cultural Worldviews. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 24. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, pp.93-159.

Wadman. R (1), Durkin, K., & Conti-Ramsden G. (2008). Author Information: Self-esteem, Shyness, and Sociability in Adolescents with Specific Language Impairment. *Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, Vol.46, pp.641-656.

Witkin, H. A. & Berry, J. W. (1975). Psychological differentiation in cross-cultural perspective. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol. 6, pp. 4-87.

Wigfield, A., Eccles, J. S., Mac Iver, D, Reuman, D A., & Midgley, C. (1991). Transition During Early Adolescence : Change in Children Domain Specific Self-Perception and General Self-Esteem across the Transition to Junior High School. *Journal of Developmental Psychology*, Vol.27, pp.552-565.