

Self-Esteem of Secondary School Students in Pakistan

Muhammad Faisal Farid and Mumtaz Akhtar

Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract: The overall evaluation of one's own self is referred to self-esteem. It is the affective dimension of self-concept. Both self-esteem and self-concept are closely connected, used interchangeably and are linked with sense of identity. Self-esteem of secondary school students in Pakistan was measured through Rosenberg self-esteem scale. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (*RSES*) was translated into Urdu and administrated in secondary school students across selected districts of Punjab in Pakistan. The sample comprised of 396 students. A neutral opinion i.e. unsure was added to convert the scale into 5-point Likert-type scale. The reliability calculated of translated version was 0.684. Gender difference was found in self-esteem of students. Urban students showed higher self-esteem than rural students. Science group students had greater self-esteem than arts group students. Factor analysis of *RSES* extracted two factors i.e. self-worth & self-competence. The achieved results were compared to the administration of *RSES* in other countries across the world.

Key words: Self-esteem • Self-concept • Identity • Urdu • Pakistan • Secondary schools • Self-worth • Self-competence

INTRODUCTION

People have a sense of identity. They want to know who they are, what they want to achieve in life and what their existence means in this world [1]. Self-concept and self-esteem, attached with identity are often used interchangeably. In fact these are quite distinct. Self-concept is a cognitive structure as compared to self-esteem, which is an affective reaction, a judgment about one's own self [2]. Self-concept is everything that is known about the self, such as name, race, likes and dislikes, beliefs, values, appearance, height and weight. Self-esteem is known to be an evaluative component of the self-concept. Self-concept is multifaceted and hierarchical in nature [3]. According to Ormrod (1999), self-concept is the sum of beliefs of individual about his cognitive competence, social competence and physical competence.

Self-esteem has become a common word and is used in our daily conversation. It is an attitude about the self and is related to personal beliefs about skills, abilities, social relationships and future outcomes. Due to its psychological and educational importance, many debates surround the topic of self-esteem. Over 200 definitions of

self-esteem are present in literature [4]. Woolfolk (2004) describes that self-esteem is the value which we place on our own characteristics, abilities and behaviours. Educational research is concerned with the definition of self-esteem, the way it is measured and its relationship with school performance [5].

Broadly speaking, self-esteem can be defined as "an overall evaluation of oneself in either positive or negative way". When individuals describe their own worth, they describe their personal self-esteem. As individuals live and work in groups or society, so they look forward to collective self-esteem. Collective self-esteem refers to individuals' perception of the relative worth of the groups to which they belong like families, peers or ethnic groups [2].

Every passing day is a new day in life. No situation in a school is exactly the same as any other situation, just like human beings. As every human being is distinct and unique so is the every situation. We cannot live in isolation; rather we influence the environment and are being influenced by it. The child cannot be separated from his total environment as he is an active agent in his development. The teacher plays vital role in shaping the child's perception of himself and his environment [6].

Human needs are of many types and they exist in hierarchy [7]. Children are born with the same basic emotional and intellectual needs. The needs of children grow with the passage of time. Child's first need is the need for love and security. The young human infant needs the attention and care of his primary care takers (parents & other family members) in first three to four years. When these needs are met, the child has the need for new experiences (like language learning). With the passage of time, he has need for praise and recognition (self-concept) and need for responsibility (future roles in life) [6]. Maslow (1970) described physiological and safety needs are to be met before an individual is motivated to satisfy belonging, love and esteem needs. When these lower order needs are met, individuals strive for self-actualization need.

When children enter the school, their self-concept, to a large extent, is shaped and is under family influence. The role of school environment cannot be ignored in forming the self-esteem of students. During academic years, it is the combination of home environment, school factors and peer relations that finally shape the esteem levels of students. Many factors can be quoted that influence the development of self-concept and self-esteem in either positive or negative way. Among these are students' own prior behaviour and performance, behaviours of other individuals toward them and the expectations that others hold for students' future performances [3].

Self-concept and self-esteem are important factors influencing behaviour and achievement in school. Self-concept affects learning in school. Researchers debate two important questions in their research studies. One deals with effect of self-esteem on students' behaviour in school and other deals with consequences of school life on students' self-esteem [2]. There are certain key factors that influence the development of self-concept and self-esteem like student's prior behaviour and performance, the behaviours of other individuals towards them and expectations for students' future performance [3].

It is generally believed that people high in self-esteem consider themselves as better liked and loved and are more popular in their groups. They have improved persistence when they face failure. They are more willing to choose their own strategies and responsive to situational cues. Being confident, high self-esteem people sometimes perform better than people with low self-esteem in groups. High self-esteem adds to the happiness and low self-esteem is linked to depression [8].

Research on self-esteem describes gender pattern. Boys and girls diverge in their primary source of self-esteem [9]. Booth & Gerard (2011) quoted number of studies in England and the United States that explain gender differences in adolescents. Mostly boys have a higher self-esteem than girls. Girls are influenced by relationships and boys are influenced by objective success. In Canadian high school population, females had significantly lower self-esteem than males [10].

Self-esteem is measured absolutely by self report instruments. Many self-esteem inventories are available to assess self-esteem. Among these, the self-report *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)*; [11] is widely used measure. Due to its brevity, uncomplicated language and uni-dimensional factor structure, it is the popular choice of the researchers around the globe [12].

Pakistan has multiple facets educational system which is comprehensive, dynamic and developing in nature. The education at secondary level is a career making stage in Pakistan. It is bifurcated into various streams at the higher secondary level. The purpose of secondary level education is to prepare students for different careers [13]. The students at secondary levels are adolescence with physiological changes that occur with puberty. Students at this level have varied self-esteem levels. There is fluctuation in self-esteem level of students and this generates emotional reactions. Generally at secondary school level, students' self-esteem depends upon their appearances and popularity in surroundings [3].

It is a general observation in Pakistan that joint family system still prevails. Parents are actively involved in upbringing their children regardless of their socio-economic status. Where education is considered important, parents try to fulfill academic needs of their children like provision of private tutors to enhance academic achievements. Majority of population lives in rural areas where education facilities are less as compared to urban areas. The differences between urban and rural areas are complex and multifaceted and are present in almost every aspect of life like modes of transportation, infrastructure and facilities etc. As far as education is concerned, cultural norms restrict women education [17]. According to the prevailing culture in Pakistan, bearing sons adds to the status of the family while daughters are considered liability. Educating son is considered long term investment that will pay its dividend in due course of time, while educating daughter is considered as monetary loss. Within this scenario, measuring

self-esteem of adolescence is the need of the hour. It will help in knowing about the perception of students in war trodden society.

The purpose of present research study was to investigate the self-esteem level of the secondary school students using the translated version of Rosenberg self-esteem scale. The students at this stage are of teen age and for some students secondary stage education is a termination stage of their education. Another purpose was to find out the differences in self-esteem levels (if any) of the students on the basis of gender, locality and subjects (science/arts) studied at secondary level.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sample: There were 396 students of 10th class from district Mianwali and district Bahawalnagar who responded to the Rosenberg self-esteem scale. The schools in both the districts are socio-economically similar to the majority of the government schools of Punjab. The sample comprised of 224 female and 172 male students. There were 288 science students and 108 arts group students respectively. Both urban students and rural students were included in the sample of this study. During personal visits of the researcher to the sample schools, the available students in the class were asked to respond to the questionnaire. *RSES* was administered in the presence of local school teacher. Table 1 describes the sample of the study.

Instrument: *Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES)* revised edition, developed by Rosenberg (1989) was used to measure self esteem level of students at secondary level. It consists of 10 items that are answered on a four point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. According to Rosenberg (1989), these ten items assess the worth of a person as a human being. It contains an equal number of positive worded items and negative worded items. Positive worded items of the *RSES* are 1, 3, 4, 7 and 10 whereas negative worded items of *RSES* are 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9.

It is relatively a simple and accessible scale and the author/successors have explicitly permitted to use this scale. Various research studies [12] showed that it has uni-dimensional factor structure. [14] Martin-Albo, Nunez, Navarro & Grijalvo (2007) also confirmed the uni-dimensional structure of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale in their study, conducted on 420 university students. Miller & Lavin (2007) used two-factor structure of this instrument, based on worth and competence in

Table 1: Distribution of Participants by Gender and District

District	Gender	Total
Mianwali	Female	22
	Male	137
Bahawalnagar	Female	202
	Male	35
Total	396	

Table 2: Reliability of the RSES within Some Selected Countries

S #	Country	Cronbach's alpha
1	Argentina	.79
2	Bangladesh	.79
3	Botswana	.72
4	Bolivia	.70
5	Dec. Repub. Congo	.45
6	Ethiopia	.64
7	India	.81
8	Malaysia	.74
9	Mexico	.73
10	Morocco	.74
11	Tanzania	.61
12	United Kingdom	.90
13	United States	.88

Schmitt and Allik, 2005. Simultaneous administration of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale in 53 nations: Exploring the universal and culture-specific features of global self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89(4): 623-642.

their study to find out the overall self-esteem of the students. They divided the *RSES* into two equal sub-scales by including statements 1, 2, 6, 8 and 10 into self-worth component and statements 3, 4, 5, 7 and 9 grouped together as self-competence component.

It has been translated in a considerable number of languages. Schmitt & Allik (2005) simultaneously administrated *RSES* to measure self-esteem level of college students in 53 nations, around the globe. It was translated into 28 languages and administered to 16,998 participants. Table 2 describes reliability of the instrument for this study in some selected countries.

Present Study: We used translation-back translation procedure. The instrument was translated into Urdu by three language experts. One bilingual expert translated the scale in Urdu. The second expert, who was kept unfamiliar to the original scale, translated this Urdu version back into English. Then a final version was prepared with the help of third expert to ensure its validity and measure reliability in the Pakistani context. For the sake of this study, a neutral opinion i.e. unsure was added to convert the scale into five point Likert scale. This modification was made to make it a 5-point scale that allows the respondents to express a neutral opinion about a statement when they are not sure whether they agree or disagree with it [5].

The value of reliability coefficient, Cronbach's alpha depends upon the number of items in the scale. When short scales are used, it is common to find low values of Cronbach's alpha, e.g., 0.5 [15]. Rosenberg self esteem scale is a small, ten items questionnaire. We found different Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.45 to 0.90 in [12] simultaneous administration of *RSES* in 53 nations, around the globe [16]. Rizwan, Aftab, Shah and Dharwarwala (2012) described psychometric properties of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale in university students of Pakistan. By using the original scale (in English), they reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.71 of *RSES* in their study. The study, at hand, described a Cronbach's alpha of 0.684 of translated version of *RSES* in Urdu.

Self-esteem level of students was analyzed using Independent sample t-test to find out the mean difference in self-esteem level of students on the basis of gender and locale. Similarly, independent sample t-test was also used to find out the mean difference in self-esteem level of arts students and science students; to get the exact picture of the sample.

RESULTS

RSES was used to measure the self-esteem level of the students. In this study it was used as a 5-point rating scale with a range of 0-50, with 50 indicating the highest possible score. The scores of 30 or below were considered as low self-esteem while scores above 31 were considered

as high self-esteem. The range of self-esteem of male students was (26-50) and that of female students was (14-50). There were 53 female students out of 224 female students who showed low self-esteem (less than 30 score on *RSES*). There were 26 male students out of 172 male students who showed low self-esteem (less than 30 score on *RSES*).

Factor analysis of *RSES* extracted two factors. This factor structure is same as explained by [5]. Statements 7, 1,10,3 & 4 comprised of one factor, while statements 9, 6, 2, 5& 8 comprised of the other factor.

Independent sample t-test was conducted to find out the mean difference in self-esteem level of male students and female students. Table 4 showed that there was significant mean difference in self-esteem of male students ($M = 36.96, SD = 6.26$) and female students ($M = 34.94, SD = 6.16$); $t(394) = -3.216, p = 0.001^*$.

Independent sample t-test was conducted to find out the mean difference in self-esteem level of rural students and urban students. Table 5 showed that there was significant mean difference in self-esteem of rural students ($M = 33.58, SD = 4.13$) and urban students ($M = 36.83, SD = 6.81$); $t(394) = -4.914, p = 0.000^*$.

Independent sample t-test was conducted to find out the mean difference in self-esteem level of arts students and science students. Table 6 showed that there was significant mean difference in self-esteem of arts students ($M = 34.02, SD = 6.05$) and science students ($M = 36.49, SD = 6.23$); $t(394) = -3.549, p = 0.000^*$.

Table 3: Factor Analysis of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

No.	Statements	*Factor 1	*Factor 2
7.	I feel that I am a worthwhile person -- at least as good as others.	.775	-.054
1.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	.732	-.092
10.	I take a positive attitude towards myself.	.661	-.051
3.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	.638	.155
4.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	.565	.234
9.	All in all, I think I am a failure.	.010	.786
6.	I certainly feel useless at times.	-.011	.783
2.	At times I think I am not good at all.	.058	.578
5.	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	-.047	.568
8.	I wish I thought more highly of myself.	.101	.453

N=396, Variation explained 45.02%, Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. (*Factor1 is self-worth component & *Factor2 is self-competence component; for detail about the factor structure, see Miller & Lavin, 2007). But now I feel I want to give it a try: Formative assessment, self-esteem and a sense of competence. *The Curriculum Journal*, 18(1), 3-25.

Table 4: Self-Esteem Level of Male and Female Students

Gender	N	M	SD	df	t	p
Male	172	36.96	6.26	394	-3.216	0.001*
Female	224	34.94	6.16			

*p < 0.05

Table 5: Self-Esteem Level of Rural and Urban Students

Locale	N	M	SD	df	t	p
Rural	124	33.58	4.13	394	-4.914	0.000*
Urban	272	36.83	6.81			

*p < 0.05

Table 6: Self-Esteem Level of Arts Group and Science Group Students

Group	N	M	SD	df	t	p
Arts	108	34.02	6.05	394	-3.549	0.000*
Science	288	36.49	6.23			

*p < 0.05

DISCUSSION

In this study Rosenberg self-esteem scale was translated into Urdu (the national language of Pakistan) to measure self-esteem of secondary school students in selected districts of Punjab. The secondary school stage in Pakistan is a culmination stage for many students as they leave their education and join hands with their parents to earn livings, due to poverty. Parents are forced to send their wards for work rather than education, for survival. Majority of the students achieved high self-esteem level scores at *RSES*. It showed that students tried to provide socially desirable answers about themselves. Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs (2003) describe that people achieve high scores on this scale as people are in habit of speaking well about themselves and they endorse favourable statements about themselves.

Factor analysis of *RSES* extracted two factors, i.e. self-worth component and self-competence component. These were exactly the same as discussed by [5]. Gender difference was found in the self-esteem level of students. Boys showed higher self-esteem level than girls. The results are in consonance with trends found in various studies conducted around the world [9, 10]. We also found significant difference in self-esteem level of urban students and rural students. The urban students showed higher self-esteem level than rural students. Similarly science students showed higher self-esteem level than arts students. Pakistan is a male dominated society where women education is not given due importance in rural areas. Most of its population lives in rural areas where facilities are less than urban areas. Parents deal girls and boys differently. Boys are preferred over girls and treated in such a way that boys dominate girls in the family. This influences the self-concept of boys and girls. This is one of the reasons that boys show high level of self-esteem than girls. With high self-esteem,

boys had greater initiatives and interactions than girls in life. Initially boys had a sense of privileged superiority over girls in family, which is finally transformed into a male dominated society.

Like any other research study, the current study has its limitations. It has a small sample and only public sector students responded to the scale. One can increase the sample size and can include the students of private schools to measure self-esteem levels in future studies. Sample of varied age can also be used for further research. Research, in future, can also focus on this issue for more generalized results.

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