Austin Journal of Women's Health

Open Access

Austin Publishing Group

Research Article

Gender Differences in Self Esteem among Young Adults of Raipur, Uttar Pradesh, India

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Received: August 06, 2015; **Accepted:** January 18, 2016; **Published:** January 20, 2016

Abstract

Study Objective: To understand the association between gender and self esteem among the young adults. The paper would also focus on how experiential and demographic factors affecting self esteem.

Material and Methods: A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among the young adults of age group 20-25 years Continuing education and residing in Raipur, Uttar Pradesh, India. All the young adults were considered of the area. A total of 203 respondents were selected out of which 110 were male respondents and 93 were female respondents.

A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared to assess self-esteem and applied along with the Rosenberg self esteem scale consisting of 25 items. Qualitative data were thematically analysed.

Results: Self esteem of the men was found out to be significantly higher than that of women. Education of respondents, education of respondent's mother, family income, caste and number of siblings were associated with self esteem. There are broader and over arching reasons behind low self esteem whose implications go beyond individual and psychological situations further delay in attitude to compete with the outer world and put a great impact.

Conclusion: Attitudes of family members towards girl child should be changed to enhance gender neutrality atmosphere at home and in the society as whole. Policy efforts must address sex specific needs to elaborate further on the areas of gender inequalities.

Keywords: Self esteem; Gender differences; Young adults; Rosenberg scale

Introduction

Gender-based beliefs are mostly derived from gender role stereotypes which socially constructed roles and relationship, personal traits, values and behaviour on the differential basis of sexes existing in every society [1]. Young adulthood is a time span in which the individuals are assigned new roles and responsibilities in the society including job, marriage, parenthood, etc and expected to fulfil new roles and adjust with these changes on their own. A conflict situation arises as they are not able to fulfil their assigned roles and responsibilities, and avoid taking advice of elders as they don't want to be labelled as immature [2]. This is the phase of life where the young adult judges themselves with their inner conscious and the outer world which intern help to develop self esteem [3]. Self esteem is defined as a combination of self worth and self respect [4] which is developed as a result of positive and negative experiences in one's personal life [5]. In India, men enjoy power, status and freedom than women starting from the field of politics, sports going down to the domestic level [3]. In general it is reported that women are more emotional, sensitive, well cultured as compared to men [6]. Adolescence and young adulthood is a vulnerable phase of an individual's life in which social comparison is also high that puts a great impact on self esteem. The individual during this age is in the influential phase and experiencing ups and downs in various realms of life [7].

Self esteem adversely affects physical and mental health. The clinical literature suggests that low self esteem is associated with depression, hopelessness, and suicidal tendencies which can further lead to attempt of suicide [8]. People with high self esteem are happier and have less chances of depression when compared with the individuals having low self esteem [9]. The defensive nature of self esteem is very evident in studies showing stress and physical disease in which self esteem protect the person from fear and hesitation. This is seen in the chronically ill patients that high self esteem in combination with close relationships, protect from depressive symptoms. Self esteem also helps to cope up with disease and survival after surgery [8]. Previous studies reported that men have higher self esteem compared to women [2,10-14]. There are few cross sectional and longitudinal studies which suggest that self esteem increases during young adulthood [15]. It is reported that students of low parental income have low self esteem as compared to other students [13]. Mother's education and education of the respondents also put a great impact on self esteem of the individuals and are positively related [14]. The studies done previously put forward that a significant difference in self esteem is seen in the individuals with different caste category. It was found that tribal students have low self esteem when

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Citation: Nupur C and Mahapatro M. Gender Differences in Self Esteem among Young Adults of Raipur, Uttar Pradesh, India. Austin J Womens Health. 2016; 3(1): 1018.

Table 1: Distribution of demographic variables on the self esteem level obtained on Rosenberg Scale.

Demographic variables	Self esteem level (N= 203)				
Gender	**Low (below 15)**	**Moderate (15-25)**	**High (above 25)**	Total	**Chi- square test value (p<0.05) statistically significant at 95% of CI**
Women n(%)	7 (7.52%)	83 (89.24%)	3(3.22%)	93(100%)	
Men n(%)	16 (14.54%)	86 (78.18%)	8 (7.27%)	110 (100%)	
Total n (%)	23 (11.33%)	169 (83.25%)	11 (5.42%)	203 (100%)	
Education					**Chi-square value 18.93, P-value 0.001**
Graduate	19 (13.01%)	120 (82.19%)	7 (4.79%)	146 (100%)	
Post graduate	4 (7.14%)	49 (87.50%)	4 (7.01%)	57 (100%)	
Total	23 (11.33%)	169 (83.25%)	11 (5.42%)	203 (100%)	
Mother's education					**Chi-square value 30.77, P-value 0.001**
Illiterate	3 (13.04%)	3 (1.77%)	0 (0%)	6 (2.95%)	
Less than equal to senior secondary (12th)	7 (30.43%)	26 (15.38%)	0 (0%)	33 (16.25%)	
Graduate	11 (47.82%)	100 (59.17)	8 (72.72%)	119 (58.62%)	
Post graduate	2 (8.7%)	40 (23.66%)	3 (27.27%)	45 (22.17%)	
Total	23 (100%)	169(100%)	11 (100%)	203 (100%)	
Caste					**Chi-square value 17.29, P-value 0.008**
General	13 (8.13%)	136 (85%)	11 (6.88%)	160 (100%)	
OBC	7 (23.33%)	23 (76.67%)	0 (0%)	30 (100%)	
SC	1 (25%)	3 (75%)	0 (0%)	4 (100%)	
ST	2 (66.67%)	1 (33.33%)	0(0%)	3 (100%)	
Total	23 (11.68%)	163 (82.74%)	11 (5.58%)	197 (100%)	
Family income (per month) in rupees					**Chi-square value 52.90, P-value 0.000**
Less than 50000	10 (47.62%)	17 (12.05%)	3 (33.33%)	30 (17.54%)	
50000-99000	5 (23.81%)	64 (45.4%)	2 (22.22%)	71 (41.52%)	
1 lakh & above	6 (28.57%)	60 (42.55%)	4 (44.44%)	70 (41%)	
Total	21 (100%)	141 (100%)	9 (100%)	171 (100%)	

compared to students belonging to upper caste [16]. The paper tries to understand the association between gender and self esteem among the young adults. The paper would also focus on how experiential and demographic factors affecting self esteem.

Material and Methods

Study design

The design of the study was descriptive cross sectional in nature.

Inclusion/Exclusion

An inclusion criterion for the study was young adults in the age group of 20-25 years continuing their education and residing in area of Raipur. Exclusion criteria was the young adults of 20-25 years not studying and not residing in that area or not present during the field work or refused to participate in the study.

Sampling

All the young adults in the age group of 20-25 residing in Raipur were considered for the study. A total of 203 young adults' respondents were selected out of which 110 were men and 93 were women respondents based on the inclusion and the exclusion criteria.

Research tool and field work

A semi-structured questionnaire on demographic information like gender, education, mother education, family income (per month), and qualitative questions like factors contributing to boost self esteem, satisfaction related to material and non-material culture etc was prepared. It was pretested on 20 percent sample for its reliability and validity. The questionnaire was prepared in English language. A 10 item survey that includes Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) was used to ascertain information on self esteem. A written consent was taken and then the questionnaire was administered to the participants. The 10 item likert scale was answered on a four point scale- from strongly agree to strongly disagree. It was used to evaluate the self esteem of the respondents. The total of the score varies from the lowest of a 0 to the maximum of 30. On the basis of the total score, self esteem was divided into three categories as (a) Low- if total score is less than 15, (b) medium/moderate/average self esteem- if total score is between 15-25 and (c) high self esteem- if total score is greater than 25. Each respondent was contacted and suitable time was taken on first visit for interview.

Statistical analysis

The data was coded to ensure the confidentiality. The open ended

questions were thematically analysed. Collected data was tabulated and graphs were made in Microsoft excel sheet and analysed using the software 'Statistical Package for Social Science' (SPSS). The entered data was verified and checked for data errors during coding and data entry. The group characteristics were presented in frequency and proportions. Chi-square test was used to compare the self esteem of men and women. P value less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant with 95% of CI.

Results

Analysis was done on 203 participants to understand gender differences in self esteem among the young adults considering demographic variables like gender, education of the respondents, mother's education, caste and family income.

Factors contributing to boost up self esteem

An open ended question was asked on what factors contribute to boost self esteem. The responses were categorised as personality, socialisation, confidence, achievement and positive attitude. The analysis revealed 16 percent of the respondent reported that socialisation, confidence and achievements are equally contributing factor to boost self esteem while personality and positive attitude contribute to 10.34percent and 13.30 percent respectively. However, 27.6 percent respondents did not respond.

Self-esteem and Gender

It was hypothesized that there would be significant gender differences in self-esteem levels of men and women. It was found that the mean self esteem score of men were 19.35±4.24 and that of women were 19.19±3.28. (Chi-square value 32.04, P value 0.031 i.e. $p<0.05$). The result shows in accordance to the expected norms.

Self esteem and Education

Education of respondent was divided in 2 groups, graduate and post graduate. The mean self esteem level of the graduate respondents was 19±3.87 and that of post graduates was 19.86±3.50. From the data (Table-1) it was observed that low self esteem is more in graduate students (13.01%) than post graduate students (7.14%). There was a statistical significance between self esteem and education ($p<0.05$) of respondent and mother's education at 95% of CI. It was reported that mothers who were highly educated (graduate/post graduate) their children had high self esteem as compared to the mothers who were less educated ($\leq 12^{th}$).

Caste and self esteem

In India, caste category is divided into four groups: general category, Other Backward Class (OBC), Schedule Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribe (ST). Various entitlements have been provided to OBC, SC and ST categories to reduce their vulnerability and uplift status help in enhancing self-esteem. The mean self esteem score of general category students was 19.42±3.79 which was higher than OBC, SC and ST category students i.e. 18.30±3.84, 18.50±3.11 and 15.67±4.73 respectively.

Family income and Self esteem

Family income was categorized into 3 groups such as less than 50000 rupees, 50000-99000 rupees and one lakh and above. It was reported that family income is directly related to self esteem. A statistically significant association was found between self esteem of the respondents and family income at 95% of CI. The individuals having less family income (less than Rs. 50000) have less self esteem when compared to the respondents with the higher family income (Rs. 1lakh and above). Similarly the respondents having less family income (less than Rs. 50000) have lesser self esteem in comparison to respondents with high family income.

Self esteem and number of siblings

Indian culture influences the preference for sons for many reasons such as kinship, lineage, identity, family status, financial security, rights to inherit the family property and religious practices. To fulfil the desire to have a son increases family size. Moreover, dowry system in the country discourages parents from preferring daughters. Increase in number of siblings decreases the dedicated efforts of the parents towards their daughters which affects their self esteem. It was hypothesized that increase in siblings reduces the self esteem of an individual. It was reported that the mean self esteem score of the respondents decreases with the increase in the number of siblings i.e. the respondents with no siblings had higher self esteem score (20.03±3.45) compared to respondents with one siblings (19.25±4.28), with 2 siblings (19.31±3.37) and with 3 and more siblings (17.94±2.93).

Discussion

Empirical results have suggested that men gender scored higher on self-esteem compared to women participants. This finding corresponds with the other studies carried out on adolescents and young adults in different developing countries [2; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14]. Gender differences exist in India as societal and cultural standards are based on specific gender based themes or gender role stereotypes which shaped expectations for men and women to behave, believe and think differently. Society generate self-views and opinions based on the feedback from others in their interactions or relationship. It is stated that positive interaction leads to high-self esteem and negative interactions are judgmental; therefore, self-esteem suffers [17]. Women are less positively appraised in comparison to men. Women are usually expected to adapt various qualities like tolerance, flexibility and socially ascribe submissive gender role, which led to reduce self-esteem [18]. Education of the respondent is found to be directly proportionate to the self esteem of the young adults. In Indian society women are not given opportunity to attend schooling and often left behind. They are forced to drop education to help in household work, education for their younger brothers, engage in income related activity and family responsibilities. The study also reveals that mother's education is found to be an important indicator to increase self esteem of the children. Education and mother's education of the respondents has showed a significant relationship with self esteem [14].

Caste is a multifaceted social and psychological construct in Indian society divided on the basis of socio-economic status and inequity [19]. Caste also affects the self esteem of the individual and it was found that non tribal (upper caste) respondents have higher self esteem as compared to tribal students [16]. The financial status of the family put a significant effect on the self esteem of an individual. The result indicate that low self esteem is more in the individual with low family income and is high in the individuals having high family

income. This finding is strengthened by other studies conducted on adolescents [13].

Increased number of siblings influences self esteem of the respondents as sons are better treated in the family compared to the daughters. It is observed that respondents having more number of siblings influences low self esteem compared to the respondents belonging to small family size. Indian culture influence the preference for sons for many reasons such as kinship, lineage, identity, family status, financial security, rights to inherit the family property and religious practices. Moreover, dowry system in the country discourages parents from preferring daughters. Privileged position of sons in the family ignored care and attention entail to daughters result in inculcating low self esteem [10].

The limitation of the study was that the study conducted on self esteem based on the self reporting and perception of the respondents but probably gave us general attitudes prevalent. The sample size was small; therefore, the observation may not be generalized to other population group.

Conclusion

Indian society is a patriarchal society where gender inequality exists. Inequality starts at home which restrict women's self esteem to grow and did not find themselves equivalent to their brothers. Such atmosphere places her in a vulnerable state of mind, increasing her dependence on her family and getting a vicious circle of dependency, subordination and poor self esteem. Recognition of emerging health issues is needed to address women with low self esteem within the cultural milieu to improve their well being. There are broader and over arching reasons behind low self esteem whose implications go beyond individual and psychological situations further delay in attitude to compete with the outer world. Therefore, attitudes of family members towards girl child should be changed to enhance gender neutrality atmosphere at home and in the society as whole. Awareness and women education is a critical factor to bring change in the perception of the individual and even women needs to value themselves that further lead to elevate their self esteem level. The key to placing gender values firmly at all levels and in all sectors a change in philosophy requires conceptualization of gender within the culturally defined roles and responsibilities. Policy efforts must address sex specific needs to elaborate further on the areas of gender inequalities.

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Austin J Womens Health - Volume 3 Issue 1 - 2016
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Citation: Nupur C and Mahapatro M. Gender Differences in Self Esteem among Young Adults of Raipur, Uttar Pradesh, India. Austin J Womens Health. 2016; 3(1): 1018.