

Role of Gender and Environs in Crystallizing Adolescents' Self-concept

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of gender and environs on the self-concept of adolescents. The sample comprised of 319, randomly selected IX standard students from 21 Government Intermediate Colleges situated in Kumaun Zone of Uttarakhand. Twenty five percent schools located in the most developed areas of advanced district U.S. Nagar and remotest areas of underdeveloped district Pithoragarh were randomly selected. Socio-demographic profile of respondents was studied using Self-structured Performa and Self-concept was assessed using Self Concept Questionnaire. Findings of the study revealed that most of the respondents had above average physical, social, temperamental, moral, intellectual and overall self-concept although the educational self-concept of most of respondents was high. No significant differences were found in the self-concept of respondent across gender and place of residence.

INTRODUCTION

Self-concept is typically defined as a person's general composite or collective view of themselves across multidimensional sets of domain specific-perceptions. It is based on self-knowledge and evaluation of value or worth of one's own capabilities formed through experiences with and interpretations of the environment (Bong and Skaalvik 2003; Eccles 2005). In simpler words self-concept is a person's insight of who and what am I. It is the notion of an individual's personal existence which encompasses understanding of one's all abilities, thoughts, values and evaluation of his/her strengths and weaknesses about which he/she might be the only cognizant one. It is a very powerful filter which helps individuals in realizing their full potential by marking a clear line between what they can and what they cannot.

The statement "self is a process not a structure" (Kuppuswami 1976) is validated by most of the scholars in the field of psychology and sociology. Like all other aspects of human behavior, the self-concept of an individual is also the outcome of hereditary and environment. Though the effect of hereditary and environment on self-concept varies from person to per-

son, but broadly both factors holds equal importance in forming self-concept. A vigilant look at the domains of human development gives clear idea that root of all developmental domains that is, physical, social, motor, language, cognitive and moral lies in our hereditary in the forms of genes we get from our parents. But how we analyze our worth in terms of how do I look, how worthy am I for the society, what skills do I have, and where do I stand morally in the society etc., is mainly determined by the feedback we get from our environment. Environmental reinforcement and feedback from significant others plays key role in determining individual's self-concept (Shavelson and Stanton 1976), and individual's frame of reference, casual attribution, mastery experience, appraisals and psychological centrality are major determinant of self-concept (Skaalvik and Skaalvik 2002).

The self-concept of individuals keep on refining and remodeling at every stage of human life cycle but the importance of nature or nurture may vary from one stage to another. For instance, the physical attributes are the major determinant of self-concept in teen years but in adulthood or old age individual measure their worth more in terms of social, emotional, moral and intellectual qualities.

Adolescence is a period of rapid physical, social, and emotional change especially marked with increased vulnerability and adjustment, transition to adolescence presents many opportunities for health, growth and development (Sawyer et al. 2012). Early adolescence is a very important phase for the development of self-concept as many physical changes and changes in a person's environment and social context takes place during this time (Preckel et al. 2013). The rapid and active interplay between self and environment is observed in the adolescence. Preceding studies in self-concept supports the fact that by the end of adolescence an individual acquire a stable and more realistic sense of self. According to Rose (2005), in adolescence "great differentiation takes place on the social terrain", therefore adolescence is considered as a very crucial phase for development of self-concept. The prime milestone of this age is to understand oneself within the social context and establishing a stable sense of identity. A very common phenomenon observed around the globe is that if adolescents' transverse this developmental period successfully they acquire a complex and systematic understanding of self.

Gender of an individual can be considered as a potent measure while looking at the impact of biological determinant on the self-concept. The basic difference between sex and gender is that former one is biological status of an individual and later one is attitudes and behaviors attached with biological existence. Being social animal humans must follow certain conducts and fulfill many obligations to live a hurdle free normal life. Generally, these conducts and obligations are age and gender specific in nature and vary from culture to culture. Age specific roles are almost similar around the world but a great range of variety is observed in gender specific roles and expectation in every culture or vicinity. In a traditional society like India gender roles of male are generally instrumental in nature. However due to modernization the roles of females are changing but expressive role is still considered as primary role for them. The evaluation feedback of society for both males and females depends on how efficiently they fulfill their primary roles across their entire life span.

As far as the interrelationship of one's place of residence and self-concept is concerned, it is observed that every society adhere unique sets of believes, values, traditions and norms. All

these factors forms psychological environment of the individual and most of the behavioral traits exhibited by individual are shaped by its immediate environment. It is very difficult to assume which factor of environment or incident affects an individual's persona to its deepest extent. The basic principle of human development says "every individual is unique", even identical twins have different personalities. This phenomenon can be discussed under the light of the fact that environment of a person is very crucial for its personality development. Psychological environment along with physical environment, which encompasses place of residence, availability of resources and exposure to modern lifestyle etc., plays a very imperative role in shaping one's psyche as well as self-concept.

The newly formed hilly state Uttarakhand sets a good example in terms of diverse environment as well as different roles assign to females. In this very state lot of diversity is observed in terms availability of resources just because of its geographical location and role of females in the family. The state is divided into two zones that is, Kumaun and Garhwal. Plane areas of both zones are known as Tarai region and difficult mountainous areas are known as Hilly region. Due to advanced medical, educational, communication facilities and good connectivity to metro cities, most of the areas of Tarai region are considered as developed areas. On the other hand, due to poor educational, medical, communication facilities and poor or no connectivity to metro cities, most of the areas of hilly region are known as underdeveloped remote areas. Resident of underdeveloped areas faces great scarcity of resources which limit their experiences to modern technology but at the bright side of the coin it also protects them from exposing to various forms of crime.

The place and role of females in Uttarakhand gives a bit different outlook than other orthodox states it is surrounded with. Females are the backbone of hill economy, other than their primary roles of care giver and nurturer of a family, females of remote areas take active part in farming, collecting fuels for cooking, animal husbandry like tasks which directly affect their family income. On the other hand, females in developed areas have somewhat similar lifestyle and status like other surrounding states. Uttarakhand ranks 21st among all states and Union Territories in female literacy rate (Census 2011) but it is

admirable that Uttarakhand is a safe place for women as the incidents of crime against women and gender discrimination etc., are substantially less than other nearby states. Due to less popularity of dowry, girls are not being considered as burden to family, besides active participation in farming and other tasks softens the chauvinist attitude of traditional society towards them.

As living conditions of both developed and remote areas are completely different thus children of both the areas grew up in entirely different circumstances. It is noteworthy to mention that after facing all the adversities the performance of a small segment of youngsters of remote areas is remarkable in terms of education, games and other competitions. On the other hand, due to lack of resources and motivation most of the students of remote areas could not even perform satisfactory and their talent remains untapped. Besides this while sharing the same platform with their cohort of developed areas or big cities, individual of distant underdeveloped areas face lack of confidence due to little of no prior exposure. The possible reason behind this scenario can be the poor self-concept.

For many decades, self-concept has been the subject of enquiry because it forms an integral part of human development (Burns 1982; Lawrence 1996). But there is relatively little research that looks simultaneously at the fact that whether gender of a person affects one's self-concept or not. Likewise, the researcher could not come across any previous research which explores the impact of place of residence on self-concept of adolescence. Therefore, in the present study an attempt was made to explore the impact of environment on the self-concept of adolescents of both genders.

Objectives

- To assess and compare the self-concept of adolescents from developed and remote areas of Uttarakhand across gender.
- To compare the self-concept of adolescents with response to the place of residence under both genders.

METHODOLOGY

Locale

The present study was conducted in Kumaun zone of Uttarakhand because of researcher's acquaintance with area and language. Due to

rapid urbanization and industrialization the district Udham Singh Nagar has become education and technology hub of Uttarakhand hence considered as one of the most developed district of Kumaun zone. On the other hand, due to its geographic location and hardships for living district Pithoragarh is one of the most underdeveloped district situated in the Kumaun zone of Uttarakhand. Therefore, district Udham Singh Nagar and Pithoragarh were purposively selected as locale for the study.

Sample

Firstly, the list of government intermediate schools located in both the selected districts was procured from the Education Department. Further, from this list twenty-five percent of the schools of both districts, making the total of 21 schools were randomly selected to draw ten percent of class IX students as respondents from each selected school for present study. Thus, sample for the present study comprised of randomly selected 319 IX standard students, both boys and girls, from developed areas of Distt. Udham Singh Nagar and remote areas of Distt. Pithoragarh (Fig. 1). The classification of most developed areas and least developed areas of both districts was done on the basis of the list of developed and underdeveloped blocks of both districts, procured from District Development Officers of both districts. Hence to get the real picture of developed and remote areas, the sample for the present study was taken from most advanced areas of developed district Udham Singh Nagar and least developed areas or remotest areas of district Pithoragarh.

Tools

Self-structured Performa was employed to record the socio-demographic and socio-economic status of the respondents. The self-concept of the respondents was assessed using Self-concept Questionnaire by Sarashwat (1984). The Self-concept Questionnaire by Sarashwat assesses self-concept in six dimensions viz. physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual. Self-concept in each dimension is assessed using eight items. The response on each item is desired in the form of five alternatives viz. always, frequently, sometimes, rarely, never. The scores obtained are categorized into high self-concept to low self-concept.

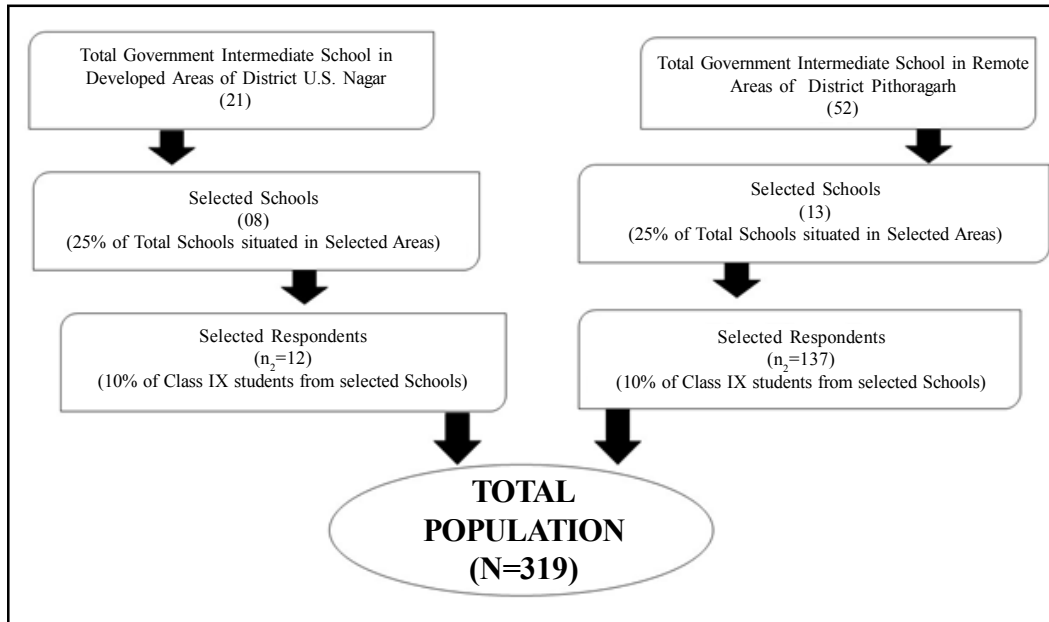


Fig. 1. Presentation of samples collected for the present study

Source: Author

Procedure and Analysis

The test was administered individually to all the respondents in classroom setting. After administration of tests, answer sheets were scored and raw scores were calculated. Mean values and standard error (SEM) were calculated. Z-test was applied to see if statistical differences exist in the mean scores of self-concept of respondents across gender and place of residence that is, developed areas and remote areas.

RESULTS

Percentage distribution of self-concept of adolescents across gender is presented in Table 1. In developed areas majority of boys (57.14% and 65.48%) and girls (72.45% and 70.41%) were found to have above average physical and social self-concept. The temperamental self-concept of majority of boys (60.71%) was above average and more than half girls also (54.08%) exhibited above average temperamental self-concept. Half of the boys (50%) were found to have above average educational self-concept and the second majority under this domain was

of boys with high self-concept (46.43%). Contrary to this majority (61.22%) of the girls were found to have high educational self-concept followed by above average self-concept. The moral self-concept of majority of boys (59.52%) was high. Almost half (48.98%) of girls were found to have high moral self-concept and exactly equal number (48.98%) of girls reported above average moral self-concept. More than half boys (53.56%) were found to have high intellectual self-concept on the other hand majority of the girls (74.49%) were found to have above average intellectual self-concept. Similar trend was found in the overall self-concept of adolescents across gender. Majority of boys and girls (62.10% and 68.37%) were found to have above average self-concept followed by high self-concept (20.24% and 30.61%).

A very fascinating phenomenon was observed in the self-concept scores of adolescents who hailed from remote areas. Completely identical trend was found in self-concept scores of respondents in all the domains across gender. However, contradictions were found in the overall self-concept scores of respondents across gender. In remote areas majority of boys were

found to have above average physical, social, temperamental and intellectual (67.07%, 67.07%, 58.54% and 59.76%) self-concept. Similarly, majority of girls reported above average physical, social, temperamental and intellectual (72.73%, 72.73%, 61.82% and 78.18%) self-concept. Majority of boys (64.63%) were found to have high educational self-concept and more than half (56.36%) girls reported high educational self-concept. Exactly half of the boys (50%) and more than half (56.36%) girls were found to have above average moral self-concept, the next majority of respondents (43.90% boys and 43.64% girls) reported high self-concept under moral domain. Unlike others different trend was found in the scores of overall self-concept respondents across gender. Majority of boys (74.39%) were found to have high overall self-concept, contrary to this majority (80%) of girls were found to have above average overall self-concept.

As far as the self-concept of all respondents across gender is concerned it is quite evident from figure that complete indistinguishable trend was recorded in all domains of self-concept except moral domain. Although similarity was observed in the overall self-concept of respondents across gender. Majority of boys exhibited above average physical, social and intellectual self-concept (66.27%, 63.86% and 61.45%). Likewise, majority of girls were found to have above average (72.55%, 71.24% and 75.82%) physical, social and intellectual self-concept. Under moral domain merely half (48.80%) of the boys were found to have high self-concept closely followed by merely half (47.50%) boys with above average self-concept. On the other hand, more than half of the girls (51.63%) were found to have above average moral self-concept, the second majority (47%) under this domain was of those girls who adhere high moral self-concept. More than half boys and girls were found to have above average temperamental (54.22% and 56.86%) self-concept. Under educational domain majority of the boys (62.05%) and girls (59.48%) were found to have high self-concept. Similar trend was found in the overall self-concept of all respondents across gender. Majority of the boys and girls (65.66% and 72.55%) were found to have above average overall self-concept followed by high self-concept.

Mean scores and standard error of self-concept of respondent across gender are presented in Table 2. It is quite apparent from the table that no significant differences were found in any of

the six domains and overall self-concept scores of respondents across gender. Therefore, it can be concluded that gender of adolescence had no impact on their self-concept whether it is developed area or remote area.

To take closer glimpse of effect of environs on the self-concept of adolescents, further comparison of self-concept scores was made based on place of residence of the respondents (Table 3). Interestingly no significant difference was observed in the self-concept of the respondents across developed and remote areas. Contrary to this, Bamman and Ksheersagar (2008) found that students of urban areas have greater self-concept than students of rural areas.

DISCUSSION

It is not very surprising that, self-concept of boys and girls is not affected by their gender in such society where gender biasness or discrimination is not very popular. However, all the previous studies strongly supported the fact that one's performances on gender specific roles influence society's attitude towards him/her. Thus, it can be stated that what is expected from one's own gender in any vicinity and once performance on their gender specific tasks affect once self-concept rather than their sex.

All the respondents of the present study were the student of government schools. A common phenomenon observed by the researcher is that in remote areas children from all socio-economic classes go to government schools due to lack of good educational facilities. However, in developed areas mostly those children go to government schools whose parents could not afford the expenses of private school. Hence the real picture was that, although respondents of developed areas were surrounded by lots of facilities but due to their economic conditions most of such facilities were unaffordable. So, the conditions of respondents of developed areas were almost like the respondents of remote areas. Therefore, no significant differences were observed in the self-concept of respondents across their place of residence. Thus, it can be stated that comparison of self-concept of students of good private schools of developed areas with students of government school of remote areas may have projected the real image of self-concept of respondents across developed and remote areas.

Table 2: Mean scores and standard error of self-concept of respondents from developed areas of District Udham Singh Nagar and remote areas of District Pithoragarh across gender

S. No.	Self-concept	Developed areas ($n_1 = 182$)		Z cal.	Remote areas ($n_2 = 137$)		Z cal.	Total population ($N = 319$)		Z cal.
		Boys ($n_{11} = 85$)	Girls ($n_{12} = 97$)		Boys ($n_{21} = 82$)	Girls ($n_{22} = 55$)		Boys ($n_1 = 167$)	Girls ($n_2 = 152$)	
		\bar{X} (SEM)	\bar{X} (SEM)		\bar{X} (SEM)	\bar{X} (SEM)		\bar{X} (SEM)	\bar{X} (SEM)	
1	<i>Domains</i>									
	a. Physical	30.55 (0.40)	29.88 (0.37)	0.13	29.82 (0.42)	29.57 (0.44)	0.05	30.19 (0.29)	29.76 (0.29)	0.08
	b. Social	30.62 (0.38)	28.99 (0.42)	0.3	28.87 (0.43)	28.55 (0.53)	0.06	29.75 (0.29)	28.83 (0.33)	0.17
	c. Temperamental	31.98 (0.42)	30.35 (0.43)	0.29	30.68 (0.44)	30.47 (0.52)	0.04	31.34 (0.31)	30.39 (0.33)	0.17
	d. Educational	33.45 (0.46)	33.21 (0.42)	0.04	33.65 (0.38)	32.89 (0.53)	0.15	33.55 (0.3)	33.09 (0.33)	0.08
	e. Moral	32.46 (0.34)	32.28 (0.42)	0.04	31.6 (0.42)	31.73 (0.39)	0.03	32.04 (0.27)	32.08 (0.25)	0.01
	f. Intellectual	28.69 (0.5)	28.08 (0.39)	0.1	28.2 (0.5)	27.04 (0.44)	0.21	28.45 (0.35)	27.71 (0.3)	0.13
2	<i>Overall</i>	187.94 (1.63)	182.82 (1.56)	0.24	182.12 (1.74)	180.24 (2.67)	0.09	185.07 (1.21)	181.89 (1.19)	0.15

Note: \bar{X} = Mean Scores, SEM = Standard Error of Mean, Z cal. = Z calculated, N = Frequency of sample, n_1 and n_2 = Frequency of sub-samples

Table 3: Mean scores and standard error of self-concept of respondents of both genders across developed areas of District Udham Singh Nagar and remote areas of District Pithoragarh

S. No.	Self-concept	Boys ($n_1 = 167$)		Z cal.	Girls ($n_2 = 152$)		Z cal.
		Developed areas ($n_{11} = 85$)	Remote areas ($n_{12} = 82$)		Developed areas ($n_{21} = 97$)	Remote areas ($n_{22} = 55$)	
		\bar{X} SEM	\bar{X} SEM		\bar{X} SEM	\bar{X} SEM	
1	<i>Domains</i>						
	a. Physical	30.55	0.4	29.82	0.42	29.88	0.37
	b. Social	30.62	0.38	28.87	0.43	28.99	0.42
	c. Temperamental	31.98	0.42	30.68	0.44	30.35	0.42
	d. Educational	33.45	0.46	33.65	0.38	33.21	0.42
	e. Moral	32.46	0.34	31.6	0.42	32.28	0.39
	f. Intellectual	28.69	0.5	28.2	0.5	28.08	0.39
2	<i>Overall</i>	187.94	1.63	182.12	1.74	182.82	1.55

Note: \bar{X} = Mean Scores, SEM = Standard Error of Mean, Z cal. = Z calculated, N = Frequency of sample, n_1 and n_2 = Frequency of sub-sample

CONCLUSION

Adolescence is a crucial phase for fabrication and refinement of self-concept. Due to cognitive maturity adolescents start looking at world from new perspective, meanwhile physical maturity makes them ready for transition from childhood to adulthood. In this phase of life young adults start setting realistic patterns for their future lives in the light of more sophisticated self-concept. Hence the combination of a healthy, resourceful environment and unambiguous perception about ones' gender and age specific roles will help adolescents to illuminate from within and ultimately evolving into a full-fledged, versatile adult.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- * Self-concept of adolescents can be compared across government and private schools.
- * The influence of contextual factors such as family environment, parents' education, parents' occupation, peer relationships etc., on self-concept of adolescents can be studied.

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