



An Assessment of Self-Esteem among Women

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ABSTRACT Self-esteem has enormous influence on mental health of women. Self-esteem comprises self-worth and self-image, which affects women's adjustment in various spheres of life. This paper presents relation of age, family income, and family type with self-esteem among women. In this context, 100 women were selected through multistage sampling method, administering questionnaire, and 'self-esteem scale for women' (SESW) on them. The study reveals highly significant relation of family type with self-esteem in personal life of women. Significant differences are also found among women in joint, nuclear and extended families, concerning their self-esteem in family relations, career life, and overall self-esteem. Family income has also shown significant association with women's self-esteem in family relations.

INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem is an essential contribution to the life process and is indispensable to normal and healthy self-development, and has a value for survival (James 1983). Self-esteem promotion can benefit from lifestyle-oriented activities. Its growth takes place in the larger context of relationship, environment related experience, attitude toward self and achievements (Khanlou 1999). People with poor self-esteem often rely on how they are doing in the present to determine how they feel about themselves. They need positive external experiences to counteract the negative feelings and thoughts that constantly plague them. Even then, the good feeling can be temporary (Mckay 2000). Healthy self-esteem is based on our ability to assess ourselves accurately (know ourselves) and still be able to accept and to value ourselves unconditionally. This means being able to realistically, acknowledge our strengths and limitations (which is part of being human) and at the same time accepting ourselves as worthy and worthwhile without conditions or reservations. (Jhonson 1991). Studies conducted in a western context find the relationship between gender and self-esteem, which is in favour of male adolescents, with females having lower self-esteem levels (Chub et al. 1997; Harper and Marshall 1991). Two studies conducted in a non-western context have not found gender differences in self-esteem (Mwanamwender 1991; Watkins and Yu 1993). Their findings are particularly interesting in light of the observation by the researchers that in South African culture (Mwamwenda 1991) and in Chinese soci-

ety (Watkins and Yu 1993), there is a bias in favour of males. Both studies referred to the effect of the educational environment in explaining this finding.

Review of Literature

Tom Luster (1995) collected data from 121 African-American adolescents to explore the correlates of self-esteem. American adolescents were expected to be high in self-esteem, if they experienced success in areas that were important to them. Specially, higher self-esteem scores were expected for youths who had graduated from high school, had positive experiences in school, were moving toward economic self-sufficiency, had positive relationships with their families, and perceived that their families approved of them and what they were doing.

The study of Bandura (1997) on pre-adolescent and adolescent females revealed that the pre-adolescent low self-esteem and low physical self-concept groups derived the greatest benefit from the physical activity intervention. The impact on the two adolescent age groups was limited because their levels of self-esteem were high from the start and the physical activity program was not challenging enough to the adolescent group to produce significant change.

McAuley et al. (1997) with respect to adults utilizing the Physical Self-Perception Profile (PSPP), successfully demonstrated that positive physical self-worth showed a relationship between global self-esteem and the sub-domain levels of sport confidence, physical conditioning, attractive body image, and strength further.

It predicated exercisers from non-exercisers as well as degree of exercise involvement for both males and females.

Galen and Underwood (1997) put forth that social aggression is directed towards damaging another's self-esteem, social status, or both, direct forms such as verbal rejection, negative facial expression or body movements, or more indirect forms slanderous rumours or social exclusion. All of these behaviours have a common goal of harming, which appear to be the core of understanding female aggression.

King et al. (1999) found that in comparison to girls, boys consistently scored higher on self-esteem, with little variation across the age groups (grades 6, 8 and 10). Young confidence was related to the level of peer integration and feelings about appearance. For girls, feelings about appearance strongly determined their confidence, with boys tending to be more confident than girls.

Paluska (2000) studied that individuals higher in self-esteem may be more likely to engage in exercise behaviour. The experimental studies conducted are artificial environmental conditions given. They do not address an individual independently and voluntarily engaging in exercise this factor affects the self-esteem.

Deborah (2004) conducted a study on quantitative and qualitative data of young adult daughters through Wisconsin Longitudinal Study. Nearly two-thirds of the mothers reported that they have been less successful than their daughters have, yet these unfavourable comparisons are linked only weekly to self-esteem.

Objectives of Study

1. To find self-esteem among women as per their type of family.
2. To observe the influence of family income on self-esteem of women.
3. To study the impact of age on self-esteem among women.

Justification of the Study

The focus of this study is on self-esteem and the process of evaluating the self-negatively or positively. Studies examining self-efficacy is the level and strength of a woman's belief that she can successfully perform a given activity, have been examined given the similarity of this construct to self-esteem. This paper is an attempt of understanding and underlying structure of the

self-concept, which can contribute to the process of mediating change in self-esteem and improving psychological health among women.

METHODOLOGY

100 respondents were selected for the study, which included 50 working women; out of which 25 were from rural areas and 25 from urban area and 50 non-working women in which 25 were again from rural areas and 25 from urban areas. The present study was investigated through multi-stage sampling technique. The data was collected in January 2007 from the Kashmir region of Jammu and Kashmir State in India. The tools used to facilitate collection of data include questionnaire and "Self-Esteem Scale for Women" (SESW) constructed by Kapadia and Verma (2000). It comprised 41 items under the responses of Most Often (MO), Sometimes (S) and Rarely (R). MO was scored as 3, while S was scored as 2 and (R) was scored as 1, in case of positive items. Whereas, in case of negative items, (MO) was scored as 1, while (S) was scored as 2, and (R) was scored as 3. The data was analyzed through statistical software namely SPSS computing percentages, chi-square values, levels of significance, degrees of freedom and co-relations. The levels of significance were obtained at the p-values <0.01, < 0.05 and >0.05. The p-values <0.01 was regarded as highly significant. The p-value <0.05 was considered at significant and p-value >0.05 was analysed as insignificant. The total score on the scale SESW was divided into 3 categories i.e., Low, Medium and High. Low level of self-esteem comprised the scores up to 62 (50 per cent). Medium level of self-esteem comprised the scores up to 63 –87 (50-70 per cent) and high level of self-esteem comprised the scores more than 87 (>70 per cent). The SESW was divided into 5 categories i.e:

- a) *Self-Esteem in Personal Life* comprised 15 items at the levels of low, medium and high. Low level of self-esteem comprised the scores up to 22 (50%), medium level of self-esteem comprised the scores 23-31 (50-70%) and high level of self-esteem comprised the scores more than 31 (>70%).
- b) *Self-Esteem in Family Relations* comprised 7 items at the levels of low, medium and high. Low level of self-esteem comprised the scores up to 10 (50%), medium level of self-esteem comprised the scores up to 11-14 (50-

- 70%), and high level of self-esteem comprises the scores up to 15 and more (>70 %)
- c) *Self-Esteem in Social Relations* comprised 11 items at the levels of low, medium and high. Low level of self-esteem comprised the scores up to 16 (50%), medium level of self-esteem comprised the scores up to 17-23 (50-70%) and high level of self-esteem comprised the scores up to 24 and more (>70%).
- d) *Self-Esteem in Career* comprised 8 items at the levels of low, medium and high. Low level of self-esteem comprised the scores up to 12 (50%), medium level of self-esteem comprised the scores up to 13-16 (50-70%) and high level of self-esteem comprises the scores up to 17 and more (>70%).

Age was divided into 3 categories, i.e., low, middle and high. Low age group comprised the women respondents who were up to age of 18-20 years. Middle age comprised the women respondents who were up to age of 20-30 years.

High age comprised the women respondents who were above 30 years. Family income was divided into 3 categories i.e., Low, Average, and High. Low Family Income depicts a family earns Rs 3000/- per month, Average Family Income presents Rs 3000-7000/- per month, and High Family Income comprises Rs 7000/- per month.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows medium level of self-esteem in personal life of women by 44.44 per cent in nuclear families. The high level of self-esteem in personal life of women is found by 53.65 per cent in joint families. Such differences between self-esteem in personal life and type of family are found highly significant (p-valued < 0.01) with the χ^2 value of 0.86 at the 4 degree of freedom. These findings are consistent across different age ranges and length of exercise programmes as well as intensity of exercise (Boyd and Hrycai-

Table 1: Self-esteem among women as per their type of family (n=100)

Variable	Family Type								χ^2 -analysis
	Nuclear		Joint		Extended		Total		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
<i>Self-esteem in Personal Life</i>									
Low	2	33.33	3	50.00	1	16.67	6	100.00	0.867 ₄ *
Medium	36	44.44	35	43.21	10	12.35	81	100.00	
High	5	36.45	7	53.65	1	7.69	13	100.00	
Total	43	43.00	45	45.00	12	12.00	100	100.00	
<i>Self-esteem in Family Relations</i>									
Low	1	50.00	1	50.00	-	-	2	100.00	0.795 ₄ **
Medium	25	43.10	27	46.55	6	10.34	58	100.00	
High	17	42.50	17	42.50	6	15.00	40	100.00	
Total	43	43.00	45	45.00	12	12.00	100	100.00	
<i>Self-esteem in Social Relations</i>									
Low	5	45.45	6	54.55	-	-	11	100.00	2.290 ₄ ***
Medium	29	41.79	29	43.28	10	14.93	67	100.00	
High	10	45.45	10	45.45	2	9.09	22	100.00	
Total	43	43.00	45	45.00	12	12.00	100	100.00	
<i>Self-esteem in Career</i>									
Low	8	57.14	6	42.86	-	-	14	100.00	5.551 ₄ **
Medium	18	42.86	16	38.10	8	19.05	42	100.00	
High	17	38.64	23	52.27	4	9.09	44	100.00	
Total	43	43.00	45	45.00	12	12.00	100	100.00	
<i>Over all Self-esteem</i>									
Low	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.997 ₂ **
Medium	32	40.00	37	46.25	11	13.75	80	100.00	
High	11	55.00	8	40.00	1	5.00	20	100.00	
Total	43	43.00	45	45.00	12	12.00	100	100.00	

Row percentage

* p-value < 0.01, (highly significant)

** p-value ≤ 0.05, (significant)

*** p-value > 0.05, (insignificant)

Degree of freedom (d.f) in subscripts of χ^2 - value.

ko 1997; Koniak Griffin 1994). Some studies found a stronger correlation between female body esteem and general self-esteem, while other studies found a stronger correlation between male body esteem general self-esteem, still others reported no significant differences between male and female respondents. Some studies reported a stronger relationship between depression and body dissatisfaction among females, whereas, other studies found no differences on body dissatisfaction and depression ratings for males and female groups. (Cindy 1997).

Equal percentage of women i.e., 50.00 per cent has low level of self-esteem in family relations in Nuclear and Joint families respectively. The medium level of self-esteem in family relations is found among majority of women by 46.55 per cent in joint families. The high level of self-esteem in family relations is found by 42.50 per cent women in joint families. Such differences between self-esteem in family relations and family type are found significant (p -value < 0.05) with the χ^2 value of 0.79 at the 4 degree of freedom. Majority of women i.e., 54.55 per cent in Joint families have low level of self-esteem for social relations. The medium level of self-esteem in social relations of women is found by 43.28 per cent in Joint families. The high level of self-esteem for social relations of women is found by 45.45 per cent in nuclear families. Such differences between self-esteem for social relations and family type are found insignificant (p -value > 0.05) with the χ^2 value of 2.29 at the 4 degree of freedom.

Majority of women i.e., 57.14 per cent in nuclear families have low level of self-esteem in career. The medium level of self-esteem in career of women is found highly among women by 42.86 per cent in nuclear families. The high level of self-esteem in career of women is found by 52.27 per cent in joint families. Such differences between self-esteem in career and family type are found significant (p -value < 0.05) with the χ^2 value of 5.51 at the 4 degree of freedom. Majority of women i.e., 46.25 per cent have medium level of over all self-esteem in extended families. The high level of over all self-esteem of women is found highly among 55.00 per cent in nuclear level of families. Such differences between over all self-esteem and family type are found significant (p -value < 0.05) with the χ^2 value of 1.99 at the 2 degree of freedom.

Self-esteem among Women as per their Family Income

Table 2 shows that majority of women i.e., 66.67 per cent have low level of self-esteem in personal life at medium level of family income. The medium level of self-esteem in personal life of women is found highly among 39.51 per cent of women with high family income. The high level of self-esteem in personal life of women is found by 46.15 per cent at high level of family income. Such differences between self-esteem in personal life and family income is found insignificant (p -value > 0.05) with the χ^2 value of 3.76 at the 4 degree of freedom. Deborah (2004) analyzed nearly two thirds of the mothers report that they have been less successful than their daughters; yet these unfavourable comparisons are linked only weakly to self-esteem.

Table 2 also reveals that equal percentage of women i.e., 50.00 per cents have low self-esteem in family relations at low and medium levels of family income respectively. The medium level of self-esteem in family relations is found among majority of women by 43.10 per cent at high level of family income. The high level of self-esteem in family relations of women is found among 37.50 per cent women at high level of family income. Such differences between self-esteem in family relations and family income are found significant (p -value < 0.05) with the χ^2 value of 5.53 at the 4 degree of freedom. Cattell (1982) discovered a similarity between father and his eldest daughter on central character traits, such as ego strength internalized self-control and low internal conflict and self esteem. These observations are not intended to diminish the influence of mothers on their daughters' psychosexual development, but rather to illustrate the limited attention given to the impact of fathers in this area.

From table 2, it is also found that majority of women i.e., 54.55 per cent have low self-esteem in social relations at high level of family income. The medium level of self-esteem in social relations of women is found by 40.00 per cent at high level of family income. The high level of self-esteem in social relations of women is found by 50.00 per cent at medium level of family income. Such differences between self-esteem in social relations and family income are found insignificant (p -value > 0.05) with the χ^2 value of 2.86 at the 4 degree of freedom. Majority of women i.e., 50.00 per cent have low level self-esteem

Table 2: Self-esteem among women as per their family income (n=100)

Variable	Family Type								χ^2 -analysis
	Nuclear		Joint		Extended		Total		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
<i>Self-esteem in Personal Life</i>									
Low	-	-	4	66.67	2	33.33	23	23.00	3.768 ₄ ***
Medium	21	25.93	28	34.57	32	39.51	37	37.00	
High	2	15.38	5	38.64	6	46.15	40	40.00	
Total	23	23.00	37	37.00	40	40.00	100	100.00	
<i>Self-esteem in Family Relations</i>									
Low	1	50.00	1	50.00	-	-	2	100.00	5.539 ₄ **
Medium	9	15.52	24	41.38	25	43.10	58	100.00	
High	13	32.50	12	30.00	15	37.50	40	100.00	
Total	23	23.00	37	37.00	40	40.00	100	100.00	
<i>Self-esteem in Social Relations</i>									
Low	2	18.18	3	27.27	6	54.55	11	100.00	2.864 ₄ ***
Medium	17	25.37	23	34.33	27	40.30	67	100.00	
High	4	18.18	11	50.00	7	31.82	22	100.00	
Total	23	23.00	37	37.00	40	40.00	100	100.00	
<i>Self-esteem in Career</i>									
Low	3	21.43	7	50.00	4	28.57	14	100.00	1.699 ₄ ***
Medium	9	21.43	14	33.33	19	45.24	42	100.00	
High	11	25.00	16	36.36	17	38.64	44	100.00	
Total	23	23.00	37	37.00	40	40.00	100	100.00	
<i>Over all Self-esteem</i>									
Low	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.101 ₂ ***
Medium	18	22.50	28	35.00	34	42.50	80	100.00	
High	5	25.00	9	45.00	6	30.00	20	100.00	
Total	23	23.00	37	37.00	40	40.00	100	100.00	

Row percentage

** p-value \leq 0.05, (significant)*** p-value $>$ 0.05, (insignificant)Degree of freedom (d.f) in subscripts of χ^2 - value.

in career at medium level of family income. The medium level of self-esteem in career of women is found highly among women 45.24 per cent at high level of family income. The high level of self-esteem in career of women is found by 38.64 per cent at high level of family income. Such differences between self-esteem in career and family income are found insignificant (p-value $>$ 0.05) with the χ^2 value of 1.69 at the 4 degree of freedom, which in turn affects their self-esteem. Hughes and Demo (1989) found that personal self-esteem is most strongly influenced by micro-social relation with family, friends and community, while personal efficacy is generated through experiences in social statuses embedded in macro-social system of social inequality. Black Americans have relatively high self-esteem but low personal efficacy. The belief that racial discrimination, rather than individual failure, accounts for low achievement among Blacks is irrelevant to personal self esteem and personal efficacy.

It is also observed from table 2 that majority of women i.e., 42.50 per cent have medium level

of over all self-esteem at high level of family income. The high level of overall self-esteem of women is found highly among 45.00 per cent at medium level of family income. Such differences between overall self-esteem and family income are found insignificant (p-value $>$ 0.05) with the χ^2 value of 1.10 at the 2 degree of freedom. Aro (1994) studied that low self-esteem has been implicated in most psychological dysfunction; however, low self-esteem is not necessarily the root cause of this dysfunction. It is believed (Aro 1994) that individuals with high self-esteem who may be predisposed to psychological disorders are better equipped to cope with those disorders and thus, reduce the negative consequences that may result. Therefore, if self-esteem can be enhanced, the psychological consequences of disorders can be reduced.

Correlation of Self-esteem as per Age and Family Income

Table 3 shows that with the increase in age, only 6 per cent self-esteem in personal life in-

creases. While as, for self-esteem in family relations, 25 per cent increases with the increase in age. As regards to self-esteem in social relations, only 3 per cent increases with the increase in age. However, with the increase in age, the over all self-esteem decreases by 2 per cent. In the longitudinal study conducted in New Zealand, The table 3 also observers that with the increase in family income, self-esteem in personal life increases by 16 per cent. While as, with the increase in family income, self-esteem in social relations increases only 7 per cent and with the increase in family income, self-esteem, in career increases by 10 per cent. However, with the increase in family income, the over all self-esteem increases also only by 7 per cent.

Table 3: Correlation of self-esteem as per age and family income

<i>Self-Esteem</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Family Income</i>
Self-esteem in personal life	0.06	0.16
Self-esteem in family relation	0.25	0.00
Self-esteem in social relation	0.03	0.07
Self-esteem in career	0.06	0.10
Overall Self-esteem	-0.22	0.07

CONCLUSION

Women in nuclear families have high level of overall self-esteem. Whereas, women in joint families have medium level of overall self-esteem. Women in nuclear families also have medium level of self-esteem in personal life. Whereas, women in joint families have high level of self-esteem in personal life. Women in nuclear and joint families have low level of self-esteem in family relations Whereas, women in extended families have high level of self-esteem in family relations. Women in nuclear families have low level of self-esteem in career. While as, women in joint families have high level of self-esteem in career. Women in extended families have medium level of self-esteem in career. Women at low level of family income have high level of overall self-esteem. While as, women at medium level of family income have high level of overall self-esteem. The high level of overall self-esteem is found among women at medium level of family income. Women at low level of family income have medium level of self-esteem in personal life. While as, women at high level of self-esteem in personal life belong to high level of family income. Women at low level of family income, have low level

of self-esteem in family relation. Women at medium level of family income, have low level of self-esteem in family relation. The high level of self-esteem in family relation is found among women with medium level of family income. Women at low level of family income have medium level of self-esteem in social relations. While as, women at medium level of family income have high level of self-esteem in social relations. The high level of self-esteem in social relations is found among women with low level of family income. Women at low level of family income have high level of self-esteem in career. While as, women at medium level of family income have low level of self-esteem in career. The high level of self-esteem in career is found among women with medium level family income.

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