

## The relation between quiet ego and self-consciousness among emerging adults in India

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### ABSTRACT

Quiet ego refers to a sense of self-identity that rises above egoism and adopts a less defensive and balanced attitude towards the self and others. Self-consciousness then, is a heightened sense of self awareness. This study attempts to explore relation between the Quiet Ego and Self-Consciousness of an individual. The study follows correlational design. 319 individuals aged 18-25 years participated in the study. An online Google form comprising of the consent and the two scales were sent across to all participants. The Self-Consciousness Scale-Revised and The Quiet Ego scale were the tools used. The results posit that Private self-consciousness is positively and significantly correlated with quiet ego. Social anxiety is negatively and significantly correlated with quiet ego. Public self-consciousness does not show significant correlation with quiet ego, thus leading to no correlation between quiet ego and self-consciousness. This study understands how quiet ego and self-consciousness plays out among emerging adults.

**Keywords:** *Quiet- Ego; Self-Consciousness; Emerging Adults*

According to Sigmund Freud (1989), Ego is the conscious part of an individual's self. It manifests the self-concept with awareness and vigilance. Excessive self-concern increases perceptions of threat and defensiveness. In contrast, fostering a more inclusive and expanded sense of self can reduce stress and improve well-being. Many a times, the awareness about the self-clouds all other aspects of the consciousness such that it becomes difficult to perceive others egos or viewpoints. Egotism is largely understood as an individual screaming for attention to the self (Snyder & Lopez, 2001). This state of a loud and noisy ego portrays the self as being grandeur and above everything and everyone. Thus, it is important to quieten the ego and transcend above the self. Positive Psychology understands 'quieting the ego' as a process to develop forgiveness, gratitude, mutual love, courage, responsibility, altruism and tolerance. Quiet ego (Wayment, 2015; Bauer and Wayment, 2008) is therefore defined as an identity of the self that is able to incorporate others without losing the self. It is a self-identity that is not excessively self-focused but also not excessively other-focused. Further, a compassionate focus helps to create a self-identity that is conducive to human well-being. Self-consciousness develops through the theory of mind. It requires the ability to reflect on

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one's own mental states. Later, Mead (1934) in his theory of the 'mind, self and society' analysed behaviour and interaction of an individual's self with reality. In the light of this theory, self-consciousness is understood as manifesting in the form of private and public self-consciousness as well as social anxiety (Scheier, 1985). Private Self-Consciousness accounts for introspection and reflection of thoughts related to one's own self, whereas Public Self-Consciousness accounts for how the individual perceives his/her presence to other people. Social Anxiety is considered as a consequence of reflecting one's own public self-consciousness.

Jeffrey Jensor Arnett (2006) first introduced the concept of 'emerging adults' and coined the same in his book "Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road From the Late Teens Through the Twenties" (Oxford University Press, 2004). He described emerging adulthood as the phase of life from the end of adolescence to the young-adult responsibilities of a stable job, marriage and parenthood. The book also details that the five evident features of emerging adults are that this age band of 18-25 is the phase of identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling of in-between and the age of possibilities. Individuals as emerging into adulthood have a higher sense of public self-consciousness and social anxiety stemming from the increased sense of instability and self-focus. That is where self-compassion comes in, to bridge the feelings of inadequacies. Self-compassion is an adaptive way of relating to the self when considering personal inadequacies or difficult life circumstances (Neff, 2010).

Literature existing in the field of positive psychology opens up many significant common factors like mindfulness, subjective wellbeing, self-esteem and self-compassion that correlate to self-consciousness and quiet ego independently. The relevant studies suggesting common grounds between quiet ego and self consciousness are as discussed.

### ***Quiet-Ego***

Wayment et al., (2010) studied 'Mindfulness, Health, and Quiet Ego Characteristics among Buddhist Practitioners' (N=117) through a web based survey. Results suggested that there is positive correlation between quiet ego and mindfulness. Wayment et al. (2015b, 2016) have found that quiet ego characteristics strongly predict resilience, coping efficacy, and well-being.

Craddock E.B. (2013) studied the role of motivational goals (self-image and compassionate goals) and self-regulatory efforts to understand the relationship between quiet ego characteristics and well-being (N=292). Results indicated that quiet ego characteristics were an indirect predictor of well-being through as seen from its relationship with compassionate goals and self-regulation.

Gunnell et al. in 2017 studied the relation between Quiet ego, self esteem and subjective well-being. They found that the quietness of an individual's ego influences subjective well-being. Quiet Ego has also been conceptualised as a characteristic of individuals who acquire a stable and secure self-esteem.

Heppner and Kernis (2015) conducted a meta analysis on "Quiet Ego" Functioning: The Complementary Roles of Mindfulness, Authenticity, and Secure High Self-Esteem. They concluded that the process of quieting the ego is strongly linked with the characteristic of mindfulness.

Kristen Neff (2003) explored 'Self Compassion: An Alternative Conceptualization of a Healthy Attitude Toward Oneself'. The study emphasised that individuals may be overly self-critical and associate self-compassion with narcissism or self-consciousness. Self-compassion is being consciously aware that one's own experiences are a part of the common human experience, acknowledging that suffering, failure and inadequacies are part of the human condition, and that all people—oneself included—are worthy of compassion.

Bauer and Wayment (2008) conducted a study titled, 'The Psychology of the Quiet Ego'. They talk about self-compassion being closely related to quiet ego. The study substantiated that both quiet ego and self-compassion share similarities in its conceptualisation, describing the ego(self) as being a less competitive, less self-centred individual with more concern with connecting with others.

### ***Self-Consciousness***

Daniel et al., (2009) studied the 'effects of mindfulness and self-consciousness on persistence' (N=142). They found that, mindfulness was positively correlated to persistence and negatively correlated to self-consciousness. Self-consciousness did not predict persistence.

Newman and Nezlek in 2017 studied relationship between Private Self Consciousness (PrSC), wellbeing and meaning in daily life(N=130). They considered PrSC to measure two major yardsticks-rumination and reflection. Results suggested that PrSC was negatively correlated with daily wellbeing.

Stephan Franzoi (1983) studied 'Self-concept differences as a function of private self-consciousness and social anxiety' in 80 individuals. After analysing their self-ratings and also the ratings of their friends, they could conclude that low private self-conscious individuals' inattention to private thoughts and feelings helps them to maintain self-concepts that are independent of what significant others think of them.

Susan Harter (2013) conducted an explorative study on Self Consciousness. She wrote that, degree of self-esteem is an essential evaluation of one's self concept, which in turn is reflected in how one perceives experience of the self.

Cheek and Melchior (1990) studied 'shyness, self-esteem and self-consciousness through a cross cultural survey. They concluded that respondents who experienced shyness rated excessive self-consciousness in the form of social anxiety. Self-esteem of the individual influences the self-conscious experiencing of the trait "shyness".

From the existing literature, it is evident that the two variables of interest to the present study have been significantly related to several common factors. Therefore, the current scenario paves way to explore a research gap of whether there exists a relation between quiet ego and self-consciousness. The study also investigates the key features of emerging adults owing to self-focus and identity exploration in the Indian context.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research question***

Is there any relation between quiet ego and self consciousness?

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### *Objectives*

- To study the correlation between quiet ego and self-consciousness among emerging adults.
- To find the correlation between quiet ego and the three subscales of self-consciousness among emerging adults.

### *Hypotheses:*

H<sub>A1</sub> - There is a relation between quiet ego and self-consciousness among emerging adults.

H<sub>A2</sub> - There is a relation between quiet ego and private self-consciousness among emerging adults.

H<sub>A3</sub> - There is a relation between quiet ego and public self-consciousness among emerging adults.

H<sub>A4</sub> - There is a relation between quiet ego and social anxiety among emerging adults.

### *Design*

The study was undertaken to be of a correlational design.

### *Participants*

319 emerging adults aged 20 to 25 years, participated in the study through an online survey. There were 79 male participants and 243 female participants. Snowball sampling method was used to obtain representation from more than 16 of the major states in India through networking. Sufficient representation from most of the socio-economic classes of the urban Indian society was included.

### *Materials*

**The quiet-ego scale:** The scale was developed by Heidi A. Wayment, Jack J. Bauer and Kateryna Sylaska to measure self-identity that transcends self-interest (Wayment et al., 2015). The quiet-ego scale measures four components such as detached awareness, inclusive identity, perspective taking and growth. It uses a (1 = almost always, to 5 = almost never) Likert-type format with 14 items. The authors obtained a Cronbach's alpha of  $\alpha = .76$  for the full scale.

**The Self-Consciousness Scale – Revised (SCS-R):** The original version was SCS as given by Fenigstein et al. in 1975. The scale was revised by Scheier and Carver in 1985. The scale claims to measure the three constructs related to self-consciousness. It consists of 22 items measured on a five-point Likert scale, which were divided into three dimensions: Private Self-Consciousness (9 items), Public Self-Consciousness (7 items) and Social Anxiety (6 items). Test-retest reliabilities were 0.84 for the Public Self-Consciousness scale, 0.79 for the Private Self-Consciousness scale, 0.73 for the Social Anxiety scale, and .80 for the total score.

### *Procedure:*

Participants were sent the Google form via e-mail, whatsapp or facebook messenger depending on how their contact was availed. The contacts were all authentic as they were obtained through primary networking. The form contained two parts. The first part was a short brief regarding the purpose of the study followed by the consent form. The consent form was required to be filled in order to proceed with the survey. The second part was the Quiet Ego scale followed by the third part, which was the Self Consciousness Revised Rating Scale. A response to each item in the form was mandatory to finally submit the form. This ensured that there could be no incomplete forms. Controls for the study were in the form of

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ensuring that the contacts obtained were real and genuine, and also ensuring that all forms were completely filled in.

### RESULTS

Both the tools were administered on the same group of sample (N=319) with the aim to explore the relation between the variables. Descriptive statistics like mean and inferential statistics like Standard Deviation helped understand the spread of the data. Correlational coefficient and its significance were then computed using the statistical tool of pearsons' correlation for two tailed hypotheses. The results were analysed using SPSS 20.0 package. The mean and the S.D. of the all the variables in consideration are given in table 1. The computed correlation values and the significance is given in table 2 and 3.

**Table 1: Mean and S.D of 319 participants on the scales of quiet ego and self-consciousness**

	Quiet Ego	Private Self Consciousness	Public Self Consciousness	Social Anxiety	Self Consciousness
Mean	50.64	12.22	11.19	10.45	42.08
S.D.	6.719	3.033	2.690	3.559	7.912

**Table 2: Correlation between quiet ego and self-consciousness**

Name of the scale	Self-Consciousness
Quiet Ego	0.019 <sup>@</sup>

*Correlation coefficient is not significant.*

**Table: 3 Correlation Between Quiet Ego and Three Sub Scales of Self-Consciousness**

Name of the scale	Private Self Consciousness	Public Self Consciousness	Social Anxiety
Quiet Ego	0.021*	0.017	-0.232**

*\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

The findings from the present study are indicative of a mixed understanding about the relation between quiet ego and self-consciousness. Quiet Ego was attempted to be correlated with the three sub-scales of self-consciousness namely, private self-consciousness, public self-consciousness and social anxiety. Private self-consciousness is positively and significantly correlated with quiet ego and social anxiety is negatively and significantly correlated with quiet ego. Therefore hypotheses 2 and 4 are retained. Public self-consciousness does not show significant correlation with quiet ego. Therefore, it has been verified that there is no significant relation between the whole construct of self-consciousness with quiet ego and therefore, hypothesis 1 and 3 stands rejected.

### DISCUSSION

The obtained results from the sample give a mixed understanding of the relation between the two variables, Quiet Ego and Self Consciousness. Quiet Ego is having a comprehensive outlook beyond the self and its needs (Neff, 2003). It is positively and significantly related to private self-consciousness, the inward path of one's thoughts (Fenigstein, 1975). This finding is indicative that the ego or the 'self' is related to one's thoughts and introspective process such that, quieter the ego, greater the self-consciousness. This also implies that when the ego gets noisier, introspection through the private self-consciousness reduces. Quiet ego

is also negatively and significantly related to social anxiety, which is defined as the reflection about one's thoughts (Scheier, 1985) extending from the public self-consciousness. Higher social anxiety clouds the conscious state of the mind, disabling it from being quiet and transcending above the self. Besides, quieting the ego also influences the cognitive factors that maintain social anxiety (Rasmussen, 2011).

The low magnitude of the correlations however, suggests the weak relation between the variables in consideration in the present sample. Therefore, there needs to be further investigation regarding the variables under study for a better and holistic understanding of the dynamics between quiet ego and self-consciousness. The results suggest that, quiet ego and self-consciousness in emerging adults is correlated with weak coefficient strength. This indicates that, identity exploration and self-focus in emerging adults which happens with self-consciousness has a weak relation on the quietness of the ego.

This brings the present study to the understanding that self-consciousness and quiet ego are not related as whole constructs. Two components of self-consciousness, that is, social anxiety and private self-consciousness are related to quiet ego. Public self-consciousness however stands unrelated with quiet ego in the data obtained from the present study. The insignificance could be due to erroneous responses given for social desirability as it is a component assessing the overt part of one's consciousness.

### CONCLUSION

The study explored how the variables of quiet ego and self-consciousness play out among emerging adults. The results suggest the following:

1. There is a low and significant relation between quiet ego and private self-consciousness among emerging adults.
2. There is a low and significant relation between quiet ego and social anxiety among emerging adults.

### *Implications of the study*

The present study explores relation between two psychological variables that were previously less explored. Findings from this study can be used for further researches on these variables on other populations and in other settings.

### *Limitations of the study*

Results from the present study are bound by some limitations such as lack of adequate randomness and representativeness in the sampling design. Also, the study contacted participants through online medium, which could account for the error variances. The study was also restricted to English speaking urban population and the extreme classes of the economic society were excluded from the study.

### *Suggestions for further study*

Further studies could explore this relation on other populations and could also pave way to understand causal relation between quiet ego and nature of self consciousness. Future research could use the present study as a base to understand the relation between the two variables.

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