

The role of gender and socio-economic status on the self-concept of adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of the present investigation is to examine the role of gender and socio-economic status on adolescents' self-concept. The study adopted a 2 (High SES x Low SES) x 2 (Boys x Girls) factorial design. In the present study, 120 adolescents (60 boys and 60 girls) participated. All the participants were from grades 8, 9, and 10 were selected from different schools of Cuttack. Both the groups of boys and girls were further divided according to their socio-economic status. Adolescents whose family income was between 5 lakhs to 10 lakhs per annum were taken as adolescents of high socio-economic status groups and adolescents whose family income was between Rs. 50000/- to 1 lakh per annum were considered as low socio-economic status groups. The participants of all the four groups (high SES adolescent boys, high SES adolescents girls, low SES adolescents boys, and low SES adolescents girls) were compared concerning different dimensions of their self-concept. The result indicated that adolescents from high SES had higher physical, moral, personal, family, social, and overall self-concept than those from low SES. In regards to gender, boys had higher physical, moral, and overall self-concept than that of the girls. In family and social self-concept, there is no significant difference between boys and girls.

Keywords: *Size Adolescents, Socioeconomic Status, Factorial Design, Self-concept*

Adolescents are physically adults, but their mental capabilities are matured or nearly matured. Their moral development tends to be fairly advanced. But their emotional development is not complete. Their conflicts are due to a lack of congruity in their physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development. The paradoxical demands of adults aggravate these conflicts.

On the one hand, they demand that adolescents must behave like adults, and on the other, they are sometimes treated like children. The 'self' has been defined as that part of one's personality of which one is aware. The self-concept is more or less organized perceptual object resulting from present observation. It is what a person believes about himself (Alsaker & Kroger, 2020).” Self-concept is defined as “ the set of perceptions or reference-points that the subject has about himself; the set of characteristics, attributes, qualities and deficiencies,

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capacities and limits, values and relationship that the subject knows to be descriptive of himself and which he perceives as data concerning his identity” (Rath & Nanda, 2012). In other words, self-concept is the set of knowledge and attitudes that the individual has about himself, the perception that he assigns to himself, and characteristics or attributes used to describe him. It is understood to be fundamentally a descriptive assessment and has a cognitive nuance. In order to take the theoretical model and self-concept, we opt to take the theoretical model and definition proposed by Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton in 1976. These authors define the term self-concept as the perception that each one has about him, formed from experiences and relationships with the environment, where significant people play an important role (Byrne & Shavelson, 1986). The Adolescent's self-concept depicts his self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-contentment. Adolescents' self-confidence is how he feels about his status, his position in his family, whether he is an expected or neglected one. Their self-concept also shapes the mental orientation of adolescents towards parents. So, the self-concept plays a remarkable role in the mental development of adolescents.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Self-concept is conceived as a component of personality that "how I see myself." Happy family, proper attention of parents, parental adjustment, parental education, quality of life, etc. mold adolescents' self-concept in a proper and positive direction (Leung & Leung, 1992). Parental care, love, guidance, and a stable family environment contribute significantly to the development of adolescents' self-concept (Raboteg-Saric & Sakic, 2014). The concept of self has three major components; the perceptual, the conceptual, and the attitudinal component. The conceptual self-concept is often called psychological self-concept and is composed of life adjustment qualities such as honesty, integrity, confidence, independence, courage, etc. The attitudinal component is the person's feelings, beliefs, convictions, values, ideals, aspirations, and commitment, making up his philosophy of life. According to the Freudian concept, the Id, the ego, and the superego are the three unique psychic structures (Sigmund Freud, 1961). The id is the source of mental energy; it is hereditary. There are urges of life in man. The principle of hedonism governs it. It is unconscious. It has no contact with reality. It contains no social values or morality and thus is abnormal (Sigmund Freud, 2008). Utilitarian principles govern it. It is the seat of all instincts. The ego is conscious (Sigmund Freud, 2008). It deals with the reality of the environment. Ego is the link between instinctive pressure, Id, and the powerful force or external reality. Superego is a group of acquired experiences of an individual from the member of society (Sigmund Freud, 1961). It exercises control over the ego. It is not accessible to the ego. It has contact with Id. It is the outcome of a child's co-existent desires to love and to be loved. Thus, in Freudian psychology, self-concepts is closest to the construct of the ego. It is because the ego is the result of interaction with the objective reality in the higher mental process (Sigmund Freud, 1961). The psycho-analytic concept of superego concerns evaluative and judgmental aspects of self-concept (S. Freud, 1923), and the evaluative elements of self-esteem has been given importance by Carl Rogers (Rogers, 1957). They found a distinction between different aspects of self-concept, self as actually perceived and ideal self, the self as ideally desired, suggesting that both are measurable and diagnostically useful (Ziegler, 2002). Cooley, a British theorist, drew early attention to the important relationship between self and society. He said that self-concept could be developed from the interaction of others with the self (Cooley, 2017). Self-concept emphasizes the psychological significance of one's subjective experience so that it is more congruent with scientific philosophies of existentialism and phenomenology than with logical positivism and scientific imperialism. Later on, American psychologists defined self-concept is more theoretical than empirical, producing a wealth of anecdotal description and

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conjecture, but a scarcity of empirical data (Devonis, 2003). Humanistic psychology during the 1970s emphasizes both theoretical and empirical exploration of the concept of self (Smith, 1990). Thus, there are different views on self-concept which need to be elaborated. Adler has accepted the self-concept as the lifestyle (Adler, Alfred, 2013). It covers the same area of ego psychology of Freud. From the early formative years, the lifestyle begins to work, gains experiences, establishes concepts and forms patterns of reaction. All through there is unity. To realize the plans of life into practice or actuality, a child adopts certain means to facilitate his work (Adler, Alfred, 2013). Adler goes a step forward by recognizing the contribution of the creative power of the mind, along with the forces of the heredity and environment that shapes the inner world of the child. Thus we find that Adler accepts the lifestyle as self-concept of a person. Phenomenological psychologists regard a child's behavior to be always reasonable and purposeful (Willig et al., 2011). The child knows best how to behave in a particular situation. The child's perceptual or phenomenal field is the entire universe, including him, as if he is threatened and reduced to an inferior situation. If he cannot ascertain and control it without caring for objective facts, he will function as if his views are reality (Willig et al., 2011). Sullivan (1953) has structured experiences into three "modes" (Bromberg, 1980). First was the phototoxic. Infact here distinguishes very deeply between his body and the external. The second structure was parataxis. Now the infact begins to differentiate his experiences and gives meanings to them. The third structure is the syntaxes. In this mode, he finds the meanings of his experiences are almost similar or common. Personal self-concept means a person's sense of adequacy and self-definition apart from his/her physical attributes or relationships with others (Polkinghorne, 1991). It reflects the person's level of personal adjustment. Adolescents who have high personal self-concept will not be overly sensitive to others' opinions and behavior, and their self-definition is probably stable (Goñi Palacios et al., 2015). They appear to feel as adequate and valuable as do most people. These adolescents are likely to be comfortable with situations involving psychological risks and challenges, unlike most people. Studies have found a gender difference in particular domains in which boys or girls most quickly achieve identity (Roles & Identity, 1999). Meeus and Dekovic, for example, reported that adolescent girls score higher levels of identity achievement than boys in the domain of friendship (Deković & Meeus, 1997), and Archer (1994), found that girls score higher in the domain of choices about combining career and family (Archer, 1985). Several theorists have suggested that personal relationships may play a greater role in females' self-definition than males. A study reported that females give priority in establishing and maintaining close relationships (Lacombe & Gay, 1998). More than 50 percent of the time, both boys and girls chose responses that favored educational identity over those that involved intimacy. However, girls' explanations of their choices were more likely than boys' to combine concerns with educational identity and intimacy (Lacombe & Gay, 1998). Kahn (1993) found that men whose work requires them to exercise autonomy to make their own decision and assume responsibility are more likely to emerge with higher global self-esteem (Soane et al., 2012).

METHODOLOGY

Sample

One hundred forty adolescents (60 high SES adolescents whose family income is between 5 lakhs to 10 lakhs per annum and 60 low SES adolescents whose family income is below 50000 per annum) were selected from different schools of Cuttack. All the subjects were from grades 8, 9, and 10 students. On the bases of their family income, 60 high SES adolescents were selected. Out of 60 adolescents, 30 were boys, and 30 were girls. Again, out of 60 low SES adolescents, 30 were boys and 30 girls were taken.

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Instruments

In the present study, standardized scales is used that is the Tennessee Self-concept Scale, to assess different aspects of the self of adolescents. The Tennessee Self-concept Scale is well standardized, widely applicable, and a multidimensional scale. The scale consists of a hundred self-descriptive statements which the subject uses to portray a picture of himself or herself or what he or she does, likes, and feels. The scale is self-administering for either individuals or groups and can be used with subjects age 12 or higher and having at least a 6th-grade reading level. It applies to the whole range of psychological adjustment from healthy, well-adjusted people to psychotic patients.

Procedure

The study continued for over two months. With due permission of the principals of different schools, the investigator selected a high socio-economic group i.e., students whose family income is between 5lakhs to 10lakhs per annum and low socio-economic group i.e., students whose family income is less than 50000 per annum. The subjects were students belonging to grades 8, 9, and 10. They were selected from a different school in Cuttack. The annum incomes of the students were taken from the school admission register. Before collecting the data, the investigator requested the teachers of concerned classes to cooperate with her in the administration of the questionnaire. With the permission of the concerned class teacher, the students were contacted individually in the classrooms. The instruction for the questionnaire was adequately explained to them, and care was taken to ensure that they understood the instructions. The questionnaire was individually administered to all the participants. To measure self-concept, which consists of 100 items that assess self-concept in 5 different domains. Participants were asked to put a cross (X) mark on each item's appropriate number in the bracket as if they described themselves. When they want to alter the answer, they blacken the bracket that they have already wrongly marked; then, they put a fresh cross on the appropriate number of their choice. Responses of the questionnaire were scored following a scoring key and tabulated for analysis. The analysis was carried out to examine the hypothesis formulated earlier. An appropriate statistical test like analysis of variances was employed to test the major predictions. The comparison of groups was attempted.

RESULTS

Analysis of Different Dimensions of Self-Concept: Analysis has been undertaken concerning each dimension of self as well as the overall self-concept. The dimensions include physical self, moral self, personal self, family self, and social self.

Table No. 1 Analysis of variance performed of moral self-concept scores of participants

Sources	df	MS	F
SES	1	676.88	36.94 **
Gender	1	576.41	31.45 **
SES x Gender	1	54.68	2.98
Error	116	18.33	

** P < .01

Table 2: Mean Ratings on Moral Self-concept Scores of Participants

Groups	Girls		Boys		Combined
	M	SD	M	SD	M
High SES	49.40	4.68	52.43	3.53	50.91
Low SES	43.30	5.35	49.03	3.18	46.16
Combined	46.35		50.73		

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Table No. 3 Analysis of Variance Performed on Social Self-concept Scores of Participants

Sources	df	MS	F
SES	1	11980.01	486.60**
Gender	1	54.68	2.22
SES x Gender	1	0.21	0.01
Error	116	24.62	

** $P < .01$

Table No. 4 Analysis of variance performed of moral self-concept scores of participants

Groups	Girls		Boys		Combined
	M	SD	M	SD	M
High SES	59.00	3.49	57.57	4.44	58.28
Low SES	38.93	6.71	37.67	4.64	38.30
Combined	48.97	47.62			

** $P < .01$

DISCUSSION

The Analysis of Variance computed for moral self indicates a significant effect for socio-economic status, $F(1,116) = 36.94$, $P < .01$ (see Table 1). As shown by Table 2, high socio-economic status adolescents have higher moral self than low socio-economic status ($M = 50.91$ & 46.16 , respectively). Results shows a significant effect for gender, $F = 31.45$, $P < .01$. The table indicates that adolescent boys have higher moral self than girls ($M = 50.73$ & 46.35 , respectively). The analysis shows non-significant effect for SES x Gender interaction, $F(1,116) = 2.98$ n.s. The Analysis of Variance computed for social self indicates a significant effect for socio-economic status, $F(1,116) = 486.60$, $P < .01$ (see Table 3). As shown by Table 4, high socio-economic status adolescents have higher personal self than low socio-economic status adolescents ($M = 58.28$ & 38.30 , respectively). Results shows that there is a non-significant effect for gender, $F(1,116) = 2.22$, n.s.. The table indicates, adolescent boys and girls do not differ much on social self ($M = 47.62$ & 48.97 , respectively). Further analysis shows a non-significant effect for SES x Gender interaction, $F(1,116) = 0.01$, n.s. The present empirical investigation provides evidence that socio-economic status (high and low) and gender on a different dimension of self-concept is measured. The empirical findings generated from this study offer several salient features. In the present investigation, adolescent boys are higher in the overall self-concept than adolescent girls. Sociologically the word 'gender' refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman and assigns them different social roles. As soon as a child is born, family and society begin the process of gendering. Nowadays, societal attitude is changing gradually. The findings of the present study clearly showed that adolescents with high socio-economic status have higher self-concept (physical self, moral self, personal self, family self, social self, and overall self) than the low socio-economic status adolescents. High socio-economic status adolescents feel a higher sense of personal worth, and they feel somewhat better about themselves. Those who have high socio-economic status tend to feel more confident than those from low socio-economic status. The confidence in high socio-economic status adolescents has enhanced sense of self-esteem and personal control because high socio-economic status persons are always given more attention, and they are given more importance in society. This promotes the better mental health of a person across a wide range of social skills. In general, individuals with high socio-economic status view themselves as active and capable as a result of which self-esteem is enhanced, whereas low socio-economic status adolescents deteriorate self-esteem.

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Conflict of Interest

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