

## Impact of Enuresis (Bedwetting) on Children's Self-Esteem

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### ABSTRACT

Enuresis is more commonly known as bed-wetting. Enuresis is diagnosed when children repeatedly urinate in inappropriate places, such as clothing (during the day) or the bed (during the night). In most cases, enuresis affects the children's personality, self-esteem and others psychological factors. Many Researches shows that the problem of enuresis significantly affects the self-esteem of children. Self-esteem helps a child to achieve our identity and to adapt to society. In a child, self-esteem is shaped by what they think and feel about themselves. Child who have high self-esteem have an easier time handling conflicts, resisting negative pressures, and making friends and develop good relations. Children with low self-esteem have a difficult time dealing with problems, are overly self-critical and can become passive, withdrawn, with depressed behavior. In this study we have tried to cover the impact of enuresis on self-esteem. It can be an asset for social value enhancement for enuretic children and their parents who are embarrassed in day- to- day life.

**Keywords:** *Bedwetting, Enuresis, Self-esteem & Self-critical*

**E**nuresis (elimination disorder) is more commonly known as bedwetting. Enuresis is currently defined as the involuntary or intentional voiding of urine. According to DSM-VI-TR (2000), enuresis is the habitual voiding of urine during the day or night into one's clothes, bed, or floor, at least twice per week for at least three months between ages of 5 and 6 years. Many children with enuresis experience significant distress or impairment in their social, academic, or everyday lives, and the disorder can also drastically affect their families.

Enuresis is an important developmental problem for school-going children and it can cause emotional and social problems for the child. Many enuretic children feel that they are the only one with this problem. They make a big effort to conceal it during their picnic, tour and camping with their friends. Children feel embarrassment, shame and blow to confidence due to enuresis problem. Studies have reported that children with enuresis experience a high level of stress, anxiety and lower quality of life (Bachmann, Lehr, Janhsen, Sambach, Mueslan and Van Gontard, 2009).

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A few studies have also described that children with enuresis were having high motor activity, more aggressive, low achievement motivation and self-confidence (Kaffman & Elizer, 1977; Moilanen, Srivastava, Nigam and Singh, 1982). The study by Agarwal, Saksena and Singh (1978) found that among enuretic children in the age range of four to six years, 88.8 percent were nocturnal enuresis children. The result indicated that delay and stress in early childhood, such as parental ill-health, conflicts and sibling rivalry, were significantly associated with enuretic children. Enuretic children frequently suffer from low self-confidence; avoid participation in social activities, negative reaction by parents. This may result in emotional stress, behavioral problems and poor self-esteem.

The study by Morison et al. (2000) found that out of 40 children with enuresis, aged five to 15 years, 60 percent were feeling unhappy or very unhappy about their bedwetting problem, and their families reported that they were feeling helpless and isolated about bedwetting. A similar study by Rutter, Yule, and Graham (1973) found that enuretic children had embarrassing symptoms and they were socially, emotionally and behavioral problematic than non-enuretic children. The study by Hallgren (1956) also revealed that behavioral and emotional problems were significantly associated with bedwetting.

### ***Self-esteem***

Self-esteem is the perception of self-worth, or the extent to which a person values, prizes, or appreciates the self (Blasovich & Tomaka, 1991). Self-esteem may be defined simply as favorable or unfavorable attitude towards self. Self-esteem is a very important aspect of human's personality. It helps to achieve our identity and to adapt to society. In other words, self-esteem is the degree to which individuals have positive or negative feelings, emotions about themselves and the degree to which individuals value themselves. Individuals with higher self-esteem are likely to be higher achievers in all performance-oriented works than those with lower self-esteem because they will be more conscientious about better performance in order to maintain perceived self-worth.

In a child, self-esteem is shaped by what they think and feel about themselves. His/her self-esteem is highest when they see themselves as approximating their "ideal" self, the person they would like to be. Child who have high self-esteem have an easier time handling conflicts, resisting negative pressures, and making friends and develop good relations. Children with low self-esteem have a difficult time dealing with problems, are overly self-critical and can become passive, withdrawn, with depressed behavior. In beginning years of children's life, parents are the most significant and important influence on self-esteem and the main source of both positive and negative experiences of a children. In the school years, academic achievement is a significant contributor to develop self-esteem.

Enuresis has significant impact on self-esteem of children. Often, children with enuresis are teased by their siblings or peers and receive negative reaction from parents. It affects their self-esteem because they feel that they are responsible for this problem and cannot control it. A study conducted in Sweden found lower self-esteem in enuretic children than healthy or normal children. The study by Moffatt, Kato and Pless (1987) also found that self-esteem of enuretic children was positively increased through successful treatments and practice sessions.

The study by Ozden, Ozdal and Altinova (2007) also found that history of enuresis among parents, low education level of parents and poor school performance were significantly associated with enuresis. It might be a rejection of those children with enuresis that may

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experience humiliation, social isolation, fear of detection, and a loss of self-esteem, all of which may increase the risk for behavioral and emotional problems. Enuresis in children is still perceived as a shameful condition and kept a secret and there is no talk about it. The study from University of Auckland, New Zealand stated that enuretic children experienced low self-esteem but positive attitude and successful treatment improved their self-esteem.

The other studies conducted by Schulpen (1997) also found that primary nocturnal enuresis generates substantial feeling of shame and inferiority in enuretic child and it impacts their self-esteem and self-image. Experiences in childhood contribute to healthy self-esteem. When children receive appropriate attention and affection from their parents, it increases self-esteem. Gender also affects self-esteem. Girls tend to be more susceptible to having low self-esteem than boys.

The study of Moffatt, Kato and Pless (1987) revealed that a randomized controlled group of 121 Canadian children aged 8-14 years showed low self-esteem; but after treatment, there was significant improvement in the self-esteem of enuretic children. Similarly, study done by Friman and Warzak (1990) also found that enuretic children felt very embarrassed and never discussed with their family members. Similarly, Redsell and Collier (2002) studied the impact of bedwetting and its treatment on a child's self-esteem and behavior. The study was conducted on children aged 5-16 years with primary nocturnal enuresis using measure of self-esteem or behavior; it was found that self-esteem improved with successful treatment.

Bedwetting had a deleterious effect on the self-concept of enuretic children. The above studies clearly showed that self-esteem of enuretic children was lower than normal children. It showed that they always perceived lack of confidence and incompetence in their abilities. Enuretic children had higher feeling of loneliness, had minimum communication and usually avoided getting involved in social activities. Parents of enuretic children did not understand the potential and capability of their child and enuretic children usually perceived neglecting behavior from parents.

### **CONCLUSION**

The research shows that bedwetting was a very common problem among school-going children. However, continuous enuresis problem might be responsible for many psychological problems in children such as personality traits, negative reaction of parents, being teased by siblings and peers, low self-esteem, high anxiety and stress. It should not be forgotten that an early diagnosis of enuresis in children and treatment can prevent the development of many psychological problems in children. Early identification and treatment of this condition will minimize the impact of enuresis on the children and increase their self-esteem.

This study will help in creating more awareness and sensitivity about enuretic problem among parents and in society so that children can cope well with the situation and experience positivity. The study will certainly help society at large and parents behave in a more disciplined manner to avoid these problems and to support the enuretic children in coping up with the problem at an early stage.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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