

Research Paper

## Examining Self-Esteem in Adolescents: A Comparison Between Children of Alcoholics and Non-Children of Alcoholics

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the self-esteem levels of adolescents categorized as children of alcoholics (COA) compared to their peers who are not children of alcoholics (Non-COA). Utilizing the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and the Children of Alcoholic Screening Tool (CAST), the study aims to determine whether parental alcoholism influences adolescent self-esteem. The results indicate no significant difference between the two groups, suggesting that parental alcohol use does not impact self-esteem in the sampled population.

**Keywords:** *Self-esteem, Adolescents, Parental alcoholism, Children of Alcoholics*

Adolescence is a critical developmental period marked by the formation of identity, self-concept, and self-esteem (Harter, 2012). Self-esteem, an evaluative component of self-concept, reflects an individual's sense of self-worth and is shaped by various environmental and relational factors (Rosenberg, 1965). During this phase, adolescents are particularly vulnerable to external influences, such as family dynamics, peer relationships, and broader societal interactions (Baumeister et al., 2003).

Parental factors play a significant role in shaping adolescent self-esteem, with parental alcoholism often linked to negative psychological outcomes. Children of alcoholics (COA) are frequently exposed to environments marked by emotional neglect, instability, and family conflict, leading to emotional distress and lower self-esteem (Hall & Webster, 2007).

However, the relationship between parental alcoholism and adolescent self-esteem is complex and moderated by various factors, including the presence of a strong support system. Research has shown that protective factors such as family cohesion, peer support, and positive adult relationships (e.g., teachers, mentors) can buffer the negative effects of parental alcoholism, contributing to higher levels of self-esteem in COA (Chassin et al., 1993).

In this study, we aim to explore the relationship between parental alcoholism and adolescent self-esteem in the context of co-educational English medium private schools in Lamka town,

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Manipur. The unique cultural and social dynamics of this region, coupled with potential protective factors, such as community support and extended family networks, may contribute to varying self-esteem outcomes among adolescents, regardless of parental alcoholism. The study also seeks to understand how these support systems may mitigate the effects of parental alcoholism on adolescent well-being.

The role of self-esteem in adolescent development has been extensively studied, with high self-esteem linked to positive psychological outcomes, including academic success, social integration, and resilience (Trzesniewski et al., 2006). Conversely, low self-esteem has been associated with a range of psychological difficulties, such as depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal (Orth & Robins, 2014). However, the family environment, particularly parental behavior, plays a critical role in shaping adolescent self-esteem. Parental alcoholism, in particular, is frequently cited as a risk factor for lower self-esteem due to the emotional neglect, instability, and conflict it introduces into the home (Hussong et al., 2005).

Children of alcoholics (COA) often face unique challenges, including heightened emotional distress and difficulties in regulating emotions (Velleman & Templeton, 2007). Studies have shown that COA are more likely to experience lower self-esteem compared to their peers (Hussong et al., 2008). For example, Hussong et al. (2005) found that COA often struggle with emotional regulation and feelings of shame, contributing to a diminished sense of self-worth. However, other studies have suggested that the presence of supportive relationships and protective factors can mitigate these negative outcomes.

Chassin et al. (1993) found that family cohesion, positive peer relationships, and supportive adult figures can serve as protective factors for COA, buffering them from the harmful effects of parental alcoholism. These support systems may help maintain high self-esteem by providing stability and emotional reassurance in an otherwise chaotic home environment. Additionally, peer relationships and social support networks have been shown to play a crucial role in adolescent self-esteem development, particularly in the absence of consistent parental support (Wolin & Wolin, 1993).

While some research suggests a strong negative correlation between parental alcoholism and adolescent self-esteem (Kelley et al., 2011), other studies indicate that this relationship is not universal. For instance, Parker & Harford (2013) found no significant difference in self-esteem between COA and Non-COA groups, highlighting the importance of considering external factors such as social support systems and individual resilience. These findings suggest that COA may not always experience lower self-esteem, especially when protective factors are in place to provide emotional and social stability.

Given the mixed findings in the literature, the current study aims to explore the role of protective factors, such as community and family support systems, in shaping self-esteem outcomes among adolescents in Lamka town, Manipur. This region's strong community ties and extended family networks may serve as critical buffers against the negative effects of parental alcoholism, leading to different self-esteem trajectories for COA. By examining both COA and Non-COA adolescents, this study seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of how support systems interact with parental alcoholism to influence adolescent self-esteem.

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### *Objective:*

The objective of the study is to determine whether there is a significant difference in self-esteem levels between adolescents who are children of alcoholics (COA) and those who are not (Non-COA) in Lamka town, Manipur.

### *Hypothesis*

- HO: There is no significant difference in self-esteem between COA and Non-COA

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Sample*

The participants of the study were randomly chosen by using convenient sampling method. A total of 150 adolescents participated in the study out of which 88 were male and 62 were female. The mean age of the student was 13.7 and all the participants attended co-educational English medium private schools from Lamka town, Manipur.

### *Data collection*

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale was administered in order to assess the level of self-esteem of adolescents. CAST was used to categorise the participants into COA and Non-COA. The study aimed to compare self-esteem between COA and Non-COA. Permission from concerned school authorities was obtained prior to the commencement of the study. Informed consent was obtained from the participants. Relevant instructions were given, and consequently, the participants filled out the required questionnaires.

### *Ethical Consideration*

The purpose, nature, duration and right not to participate or withdrawal at any time were explained. Informed consent was taken from the participants and Confidentiality of the data collected was maintained.

### *Tool used*

- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES):** The scale was developed by Morres Rosenberg. It measures global self-esteem and positive and negative feelings about the self. It is a 10-item questionnaire with 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree) scale. The scale has a good predictive validity as well as internal consistency and test-retest reliability. Cronbach coefficient has been shown to be high ( $M=0.81$ ) supporting the internal coherence of the scale. The overall internal consistency for the RSES Scale is 0.77, the test-retest reliability over a period of 2 weeks reveals correlations of 0.85 and 0.88 indicating excellent stability. It demonstrates a Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility of 0.92, indicating excellent internal consistency. (Buchanan, 2024).
- **Children of Alcoholic Screening Tool (modified):** The questions in the COA screening tool developed by Jones and Pilat, have been rigorously used for screening COAs. There are six items in the tool. Three or more 'yes' answers are scored as probably a COA (Hodgins et al., 1993).

### *Statistical Analysis:*

For testing the hypothesis in the study, appropriate statistical methods were applied-

- Psychometric adequacies of the scale of the psychological tools was tested

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- The data are manually coded and analysed using SPSS software and reliability was also analysed
- Chi-square test was calculated to find the relationship between parental alcoholism and adolescent self-esteem.

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data were analyzed to compare self-esteem levels between COA and Non-COA groups. The results are summarized in the following table:

*Table 1: Tabulation of Chi-square on Self-esteem in Children of Alcoholics and Children of non-alcoholics*

State of parental alcoholism	Self esteem		Grand Total	Chi square (p-value)
	High	Low		
COA	36	38	74	0.23 (0.63)
NCOA	34	42	76	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>150</b>	

The study sample consisted of 150 adolescents, with 74 identified as Children of Alcoholics (COA) and 76 as Children of Non-Alcoholics (Non-COA). Self-esteem levels were assessed and categorized as either high or low based on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale scores.

Table 1 presents the distribution of self-esteem levels across COA and Non-COA groups. Among COA, 36 (48.6%) exhibited high self-esteem, while 38 (51.4%) showed low self-esteem. In the Non-COA group, 34 (44.7%) demonstrated high self-esteem, and 42 (55.3%) displayed low self-esteem.

To examine the relationship between parental alcoholism and adolescent self-esteem, statistically analysed chi-square test was used. The analysis yielded a chi-square value of 0.23 with a p-value of 0.63. As this p-value exceeds the conventional significance level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

The results of this study suggest that there is no statistically significant association between parental alcoholism and self-esteem levels among adolescents in our sample from Lamka town, Manipur. The observed differences in self-esteem between Children of Alcoholics (COA) and Non-Children of Alcoholics (Non-COA) may be attributed to factors other than a direct impact of parental alcoholism on adolescent self-esteem. This finding is notable given that numerous studies have previously identified a negative correlation between parental alcoholism and self-esteem among adolescents (Harter, 1999; Hussong et al., 2008). One crucial aspect to consider is that self-esteem is a multifaceted construct influenced by various factors beyond parental behavior. In our study, the broader societal and community context may play a significant role in shaping self-esteem outcomes. The population from Lamka town, Manipur, is embedded in a unique cultural and social framework that could influence how self-esteem develops, potentially alleviating or intensifying the effects of parental alcohol use. For instance, the strong community ties, extended family networks, and cultural values prevalent in this region may provide a protective shield against the negative impacts typically associated with parental alcoholism.

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No significant difference in self-esteem between COA and Non-COA groups in this study highlights the importance of considering these protective factors. Cultural and social support systems, such as extended family support, community cohesion, and local cultural values, may play a significant role in safeguarding adolescents from the adverse effects of parental alcoholism. These protective factors can provide emotional support, stability, and a sense of belonging, which are essential for positive self-esteem development.

The findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on the effects of parental alcoholism on adolescent development, suggesting that the relationship between parental alcoholism and self-esteem may not be universal across all cultural contexts. While previous research often identifies a strong negative impact of parental alcoholism on COA's self-esteem, our study indicates that this relationship may vary depending on cultural and contextual factors. This highlights the need for a better understanding of how different environments and support systems can influence adolescent self-esteem.

Future research should explore these potential protective factors in more detail. Investigating how extended family support, community cohesion, and cultural values interact with parental behavior to influence adolescent self-esteem could provide valuable insights. Additionally, longitudinal studies could offer a deeper understanding of how these factors might buffer against or exacerbate the effects of parental alcoholism over time.

However, it is also important to note the limitations of this study, including its focus on a specific geographical area and cultural context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study prevents us from drawing conclusions about causal relationships or long-term effects.

While our findings suggest no significant impact of parental alcoholism on adolescent self-esteem in this population, it remains crucial to continue supporting families affected by alcoholism. Intervention programs and support services should consider the complex interplay of cultural, social, and individual factors in addressing the needs of COA.

In conclusion, this study highlights the complexity of adolescent self-esteem development and the importance of considering cultural context in research on family dynamics and adolescent well-being. It provides a foundation for future investigations into the nuanced relationships between parental behaviour, cultural factors, and adolescent psychological outcomes.

### CONCLUSION

This study concludes that, based on the data collected, there is no significant difference in self-esteem between adolescents who are children of alcoholics (COA) and those who are not (Non-COA) within the sampled population. The findings suggest that parental alcoholism does not have a direct impact on adolescent self-esteem in this context.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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