

Self-concept of Adolescent Students from Single Sex and Co-Educational Schools

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ABSTRACT

In order to evaluate the hypothesis that there is no difference in the self-concept of adolescent students from single sex and co-educational high schools, the investigator conducted a study on 60 subjects (30 boys and 30 girls) out of which 30 subjects were from single sex schools and remaining were from the co-educational school. The measurement was done using the Self-concept Rating Checklist by Dr. Pratibha Deo which contains 90 adjectives describing a person's self-concept. The result shows that adolescent students from co-educational schools have a better self-concept as compared to the adolescent students from single sex schools. When the various dimensions were analyzed, it was found that the boys from co-educational schools had better aesthetic and character dimensions while the girls from the co-educational schools were found to be better in social and intellectual dimensions.

Keywords: *Single Sex School, Co-Educational School, Self-Concept, Adolescents*

Self-concept (self-construction, self-identity or self-perspective) is a multi-faceted paradigm which relates person's perception of self to various characteristics like gender, sexuality, occupation, academics, hobbies, abilities, physical attributes and countless others. Sociocognitive behaviorists have proposed another theory of self-concept involving three components i.e. Self-esteem (Baron and Byrne, 2000), Stability and Self-efficacy. All three amalgamate to form a complex whole known as self-concept.

Self-concept is not innate, but develops with the child's progressive interaction with immediate society and the environment on the whole and with parent's gender stereotyping and expectations (Tiedemann, 2000). Some suggest it to be at the later age, around seven - eight when the child starts receiving and understanding feedback about himself by immediate social agencies i.e. teachers, parents and peers. However, it is unanimously accepted that promoting high self-concept is important as it relates to academic and life success. The people with a low self-esteem tend to be unhappy, less sociable, more likely to use drugs and

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alcohol, and are more vulnerable to depression, which are all correlated with lower academic achievement (Wiggins, 1994).

In context of this, a lot of debate occurs at the time of kid's admission as to which is better: single sex or co- educational school. The difference in environment offered by the two structures is gigantic. Single sex schooling means teaching students in an enclosed zone where genders of same sex attend classes together. Such schools provide activities or curriculum with stipulations specific to a gender's interest, motivation and learning styles. Many supporters of single-sex education hold the view that it can help students learn more effectively as the boys and girls learn differently because of structural differences between male and female brains. Hence, the method of education should differ for males and females as any technique that engrosses girls in the subject matter may bore boys, and vice versa (National Association for Single Sex Public Education, 2006).

Co-education (co- educational, mixed schooling) means the teaching of both sexes under the same roof. It is the integration of both the sexes in one educational environment and imparting the same education to both the sexes without any distinction. Many scholars advocate the benefit of this system too. They argue that without the presence of the opposite sex, students are denied a learning environment representative of real life (Mael, 1998). This deprives them of the opportunity to develop skills for interaction with peers of all genders in their work environment and fosters ignorance and prejudice towards the other gender. It can also foster better mental and emotional situations.

Thus, the present study is designed to find out which system of education favors positive development of self-concept of adolescents with the following objective.

Objective

- Studying the difference in self-concept of adolescent students from single sex and co-educational schools.

Hypothesis

1. No difference exists between self-concept of adolescent students from single sex and co-ed school.
2. No difference exists between self-concept of adolescent girls from single sex and co-ed schools.
3. No difference exists between self-concept of adolescent boys from single sex and co-ed schools.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Adolescent students (N=60) from single sex and unisex schools were randomly selected, between the age group of 13- 15 years, out of which 15 girls and 15 boys were from single sex schools and 15 girls and 15 boys were from co- educational schools.

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Measurement

The tool used in the study was Self-concept Rating Checklist by Dr. Pratibha Deo. It measures the self-concept by means of a self-reporting checklist consisting of 90 adjectives. The checklist can also be divided in the positive, negative and neutral classes as well as in the dimensions of Intellectual, Emotions, Character, Social, Aesthetic characteristics. It can be used for age groups which possess reading ability and are mature enough to report about themselves.

Statistical analysis

The gathered data was tabulated, computed and analyzed using SPSS version 19 to find out the mean, S.D. and t test.

RESULTS

The results in accords to the above mentioned hypothesis are being given below,

Table 1 Self concept scores of adolescent respondents

Adolescent students from single sex school		Adolescent students from co-educational school		t value
Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
76.4	21.4	96.3	17.7	4.75*

Table 1 indicates that significant difference exists in self-concept of adolescents from coed schools and single sex school where adolescents from coed school score high (96.3) as compared to that of single sex school (76.4). The variability may be attributed due to difference in various dimensions.

Table 2 Self concept dimensions scores of girls

SN	Dimension	Girls of single sex school		Girls of co- educational school		t values
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
1.	Aesthetic	13.06	2.9	12.5	2.5	0.8
2.	Emotional	11.4	2.16	10.53	2.3	1.5
3.	Social	15.7	3.4	25.26	4.07	9.87*
4.	Intellectual	19.3	2.95	26.8	9.03	4.32*
5.	Character	24.66	15.9	27.4	15.3	1.53
	Total	84.12	27.31	102.5	33.2	2.77*

Table 2 reveals that overall there is significant difference in self-concept of girls of single sex and co- educational school.

Particularly, significant difference exists in social and intellectual dimension. In both of them, the girls of co- educational schools fared more (Social: 25.26, Intellectual: 26.8) when compared with mean scores of girls from single sex school (Social: 15.7, Intellectual: 19.3) indicating more positive development of social and intellectual dimension in a co-educational environment.

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Table 3 Adolescent boys of single sex school and coed schools

SN	Dimension	Boys of single sex school		Boys of co- educational school		t values
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
1.	Aesthetic	10.5	2.98	12.5	3.77	2.27*
2.	Emotional	9.5	3.15	10.4	2.45	1.23
3.	Social	15.8	2.14	14.4	1.95	1.92
4.	Intellectual	20.2	7.54	19.13	7.9	0.53
5.	Character	13.33	5.61	20.14	12.6	2.70*
	Total	69.33	21.42	76.57	28.67	1.10

Table 3 reveals that overall there is no difference in self-concept of boys of single sex and coed school. However significant difference exists in Aesthetic and Character dimension. In both of them, boys of coed schools fared more (Aesthetic: 12.5, Character: 20.14) as compared to mean scores of boys from single sex school (Aesthetic: 10.5, Character: 13.33) indicating more positive development of social and intellectual dimension in a coed environment.

CONCLUSION

The results implicated that adolescent students from co- educational schooling report higher self- concept as against their single sex schooled counterparts. It can be attributed to the fact that co- educational schooling provides a platform to the students for mixed gender relationship which is more symmetrical to the real- world situation. On the other hand, single sex education provides an environment which is protective to one gender and might make them feel insecure or ill equipped to face the actual world competition, providing a limited educational and social experience. The findings are consistent with studies (Dale, 1969, 1971, 1974; Schmuck, 2005; Smyth, 2010) suggesting mixed sex schooling is healthier for both sexes in the long run.

Further, it was revealed that the overall difference between self- concepts of adolescent girls from co- educational school was substantially higher particularly on Social and Intellectual dimension. The results can be due to the different environment offered by both the education system where co- educational schooling provides a more challenging environment by increasing spirit of competition and motivation with interface of both the sexes. This might result in higher scores on intellectual dimension. Also, greater social scores indicate more confident and stable individuals due to increased opportunity of interactions between both the groups (Vail, 2002; Kommer, 2006).

Another major finding, reported that boys from a co- educational school scored higher on Aesthetic and Character dimension than the ones from single sex school. This indicates an increased sense of appreciation and understanding of art and integrity building in a student's life. A child's personality and character are formed from longstanding stimuli and thus when both genders get an opportunity to amalgamate within itself, each recognizes norms of the group ensuring conformity and character building (Johnson and Johnson, 1991).

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Hence, it can be concluded that coeducation provides better social environment and nurtures positivity, promoting gender equality and incorporates respect and peace in society at large.

Recommendations

Following are few suggestions that could be of importance for future research in the field:

1. Sample of the present investigation consisted of age range between 13-15 years. However study with two age groups i.e. early adolescence (10-14 years) and late adolescence (15- 18 years) would lead to more comprehensive results.
2. Sample of present investigation was drawn from private schools of Jaipur city. Further research could be conducted among various categories of schools like government, private and convent schools to compare the effect different schools offer on self concepts of its students.
3. Furthermore, larger sample size should be involved to increase the generalizability of the research.

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