



Self- Esteem as a Determinant of Stress among College Students of Rohilkhand Region

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Abstract

Self-esteem is a global self-evaluation that blends many specific evaluations about one's adequacy, which have a profound effect on the stress of students. The student with low self-esteem usually feels unworthy, incapable, and incompetent. The present study was undertaken to examine the level of stress among high and low self-esteem college students. It also measures the level of stress among high self-esteem undergraduate boys and girls students and among low self-esteem undergraduate boys and girls students. The study was conducted on 80 undergraduate boys and 80 undergraduate girls (total 160 students) who were studying in different degree colleges affiliated by Rohilkhand University. The sample was drawn by stratified proportionate random sampling. The sample was divided into 80 students who are high on self-esteem (40 boys and 40 girls) and 80 students who are low on self-esteem (40 boys and 40 girls). Self-esteem was measured by using by R.N. Singh and Ankita Srivastava's Self-Esteem Scale and stress was measured with Students Stress Scale developed by Taresh Bhatia and Arunima Pathak. Results indicated that magnitude of stress was significantly higher in low self-esteem college students as compared to high self-esteem college students. Gender difference for high self-esteem college students was not significant but the level of stress was significantly higher in low self-esteem undergraduate girls students as compared to low self esteem undergraduate boys students. The study revealed that the stronger the self-esteem of the college students the lower the level of stress faced by them.

Keywords: Self-esteem, Stress, Gender, Students



Introduction

Self-esteem is an aspect of self concept. Self-esteem is used to describe a person's overall sense of self-worth or personal value. It is a judgment of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self. Self-esteem is often seen as a personality trait, which means that it tends to be stable and enduring. Self-esteem can involve a variety of beliefs about the self, such as the appraisal of one's own appearance, beliefs, emotions and behaviors. Positive self-esteem gives the individuals the strength and flexibility to take charge of lives and grow from mistakes without the fear of rejection. Low self-esteem is a debilitating condition that keeps individuals from realizing their full potential. The person with low self-esteem feels poorly about him or herself. A person with low self-esteem usually feels unworthy, incapable, and incompetent.

Abraham Maslow states that psychological health is not possible unless the essential core of the person is fundamentally accepted, loved and respected by others and by her or his self. Self-esteem allows people to face life with more confidence, benevolence and optimism, and thus easily reach their goals and self-actualize. It allows a person to be more ambitious, but not with respect to possessions or success, but with respect to what they can experience emotionally, creatively and spiritually. The high self-esteem may refer to accurate justified perceptions of one's worth as a person and one's successes and accomplishments. On the other hand low self-esteem can develop into other problems. (Usher & Others, 2000; Zimmerman, Copeland & Shope, 1997).

Self-esteem provides a mental set that prepares an individual to respond according to expectations of success, acceptance and personal strength. Self-esteem is an integral part of college student's performance and their pressure tolerance capacity. Caprara, Barbaranelli, Gerbino & Pastorelli, (2003) reported that self-esteem determine an individuals' resiliency to adversity and his vulnerability to stress and depression. Moreno, Estévez, Murgui, & Musitu, (2009) reported that self-esteem is positively related to emotional functioning. Waddar & Aminabhavi (2010) found that both academic stress and environment are important and determinative to form the students' experiences beside five variables including age, sex, motivation, self-esteem, and academic self-concept.

Stress is a natural human response to pressure when faced with challenging and sometimes dangerous situations. Most college students experience high stress when they perceive situation as dangerous, difficult, or painful and they do not have the resources to cope. The events are centered in the two most important domains of higher education students life are home and college. They relate to issues of conflict and loss. Some adolescent student becomes overloaded with stress. Inadequately managed stress can lead to anxiety, withdrawal, aggression,



physical illness, or poor coping skills such as drug and / or alcohol use. The World Health Organization recommends in “Preventing Suicide” published in 2000 that strengthening student’s self-esteem is important to protect children and adolescents against mental distress and despondency, enabling them to cope adequately with difficult and stressful life situations. As a social psychological construct, self-esteem has also been treated as an important outcome due to its close relation with mental health. Other than increased happiness, higher self-esteem may also enhance the ability to cope with stress and a higher likeliness that the individual takes on difficult tasks relative to those with low self-esteem.

Today college students are living in an increasingly anxiety ridden atmosphere. (Sharma, 2006). They live in a world when nothing seems to be guaranteed with certainty and at the same time are expected to perform at every front, the main being academics. (Bhansali & trivedi, 2008). Most of the problems concentrated on academic anxiety are followed by anxiety regarding their future. Stress was caused due to the examination system, burden of homework and attitudes of parents and teachers. Parental pressure is also responsible to create stress as the emphasis is not given to acquire knowledge but to excel. When the adolescents are unable to meet their parent’s expectations, it is then that frustration, aggression, depression and other undesirable behaviors and suicide may take place. Peer pressure, pressure from family and media play a big role in building perceptions of students (Trivedi, 2008).

Gender is the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between, masculinity and femininity. Depending on the context, these characteristics may include biological sex (i.e. the state of being male, female or an intersex variation which may complicate sex assignment) and sex-based social structures (including gender roles and other social roles). Biological sex is a genetical phenomenon which is determined by chromosomes. Due to different combinations of chromosomes boy and girl sex is determined. In modern times due to particular socialization process (different gender and social roles) and parenting style male (boy) and female (Girl) college student may have different degree of self-esteem.

The pressure to perform and preparation for career begins early gaining momentum in the college’s years. Due to the increasing estranged behaviour manifested by many college going students, it is necessary to have a look at the factors that contribute to high level of stress in college students. It has therefore been assumed for the present purpose that the level of stress is dependent on several psychosocial factors. The level of stress in college students may vary with their level of self-esteem. The present study was undertaken to examine the effect of self-esteem on the stress of undergraduate college students of the Rohilkhand region. The central purpose of the present was to examine the level of stress among high and low self-esteem college students.



It also measures the level of stress among high self-esteem undergraduate boys and girls students and among low self-esteem undergraduate boys and girls students.

Objectives: -

- 1). To find out the difference in the level of stress among high and low self-esteem college students.
- 2). To find out the difference in the level of stress among high self esteem boys and girls college students.
- 3). To find out the difference in the level of stress among low self esteem boys and girls college students.

Hypotheses:-

- 1). There will be significant difference in the level of stress among high and low self-esteem college students.
- 2). There will be significant difference in the level of stress among high self esteem boys and girls college students.
- 3). There will be significant difference in the level of stress among low self esteem boys and girls college students.

Method

Sample: The study was conducted on 80 undergraduate boys and 80 undergraduate girls who were studying in different degree colleges affiliated by Rohilkhand University. The sample was collected from the degree colleges situated in Bareilly, Rampur, Amroha and Moradabad. The sample was drawn by stratified proportionate random sampling. The sample was drawn from Science and Arts undergraduate students of both genders. The students were between the age group of 18-20 years. The sample was divided into 80 students who are high on self-esteem (40 boys and 40 girls) and 80 students who are low on self esteem (40 boys and 40 girls).

Tools:

Self Esteem Scale: This scale was developed by R.N. Singh and Ankita Srivastava. This scale is based on the Self-esteem Scale originally developed by Robinson and Shaver (1973).The test consists of 20 items and each item is accompanied by five alternative response categories, namely very much, much, average, low and very low. The Self-esteem Scale demonstrated a test–retest reliability of .82 and on the basis of split half method the reliability coefficient was

.86. Higher scores on the scale show higher self-esteem.

Students Stress Scale: This Scale was developed by Tarish Bhatia and Arunima Pathak. This scale assesses the level of stress of students in the age range of 16 to 21 years. It is a 30 items self –report item that includes six areas, Academic Stress, Financial Stress, Vocational Stress, Family Stress, Social Stress, and Emotional Stress. The scale demonstrated a strong test –retest reliability for six areas ranging from .71 to .81 and over all reliability coefficient was .79. Higher scores on the scale indicate higher level of stress.

Results and Discussion

Table -1: Mean, SD and t-value of Stress Scores of High and Low Self –Esteem College Students

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value
High Self-Esteem Students	80	67.36	12.10	13.27**
Low Self-Esteem Students	80	99.67	18.10	

** P<0.01

The first objective of the present study was to find out the difference in the level of stress among high and low self-esteem college students. The data were analyzed with the help of t test and the results are given in table number 1. From the results given in table number 1, it appeared that there is substantial difference in level of stress among high and low self-esteem college students. The mean of stress scores were 67.36 and 99.67 respectively for high and low self-esteem undergraduate college students. The results indicate that high self-esteem college students had significantly lower level of stress than the low self-esteem college students, as the difference between the two groups was found statistically significant (t= 13.27, P<0.01). Thus, hypothesis presuming significant difference in the level of stress among high and low self-esteem college students was found to be proved. This implies that the stronger the self-esteem of the college students the lower the level of Stress faced by them. This may be due to the fostering of social resources and effective coping when self-esteem is high, (Abouserie, 1994). This finding is consistent with findings of earlier studies. Scherer et al. (1982) and Schwarzer (1994) found that

self-esteem provides a broad and stable sense of personal competence to deal effectively with a variety of stressful situations. Hoffman (2004) demonstrated that self-esteem is an important factor in the perception of stress as it affects the ability to deal effectively with environmental pressures and demands.

Table -2: Mean, SD and t-value of Stress Scores of High Self –Esteem Boys and Girls College Students

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value
High Self-Esteem Boys Students	40	68.05	12.99	.506 (NS)
High Self-Esteem Girls Students	40	66.67	11.26	

NS- Not Significant

The second objective of the present study was to find out the difference in the level of stress among high self esteem boys and girls college students. Table 2 shows there is no significant difference ($t = .506$) in the level of stress among high self-esteem boys and girls college students. Thus, hypothesis presuming significant difference in the level of stress among high self esteem boys and girls college students was rejected. Both the high self-esteem boys and girls scored somewhat equally. Both had almost same and low level of stress. This implies that high self- esteem students normally think and feel about themselves the way they are made to feel and think from their childhood days. In this aspect a lot depends upon how the “significant others’ in their lives think about them and interact with them. The social setting in the many cities of India is based on equilibrium, which establishes an equal dominance of boys and girls in many spheres during the early years of life. In the urban setting those girl students who gets equal opportunity regarding studies, exposure etc as the boys students develops high self-esteem and they may also enhance the stress tolerance capacity as boys students. This is in confirmation with several studies where the self-esteem of students was found to be very high irrespective of gender and age (Block & Robbins,1993). Parish & McClusky (1992) found that higher the perceived level of parental warmth, the higher the self-esteem. It was also found that students with high self-esteem are less stressed than those with low self-esteem (Bezbaruah, 2000).

Table -3: Mean, SD and t-value of Stress Scores of Low Self-Esteem Boys and Girls College Students

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Low Self-Esteem Boys Students	40	93.37	16.88	3.30 **
Low Self-Esteem Girls Students	40	105.97	17.25	

** P<0.01

The third objective of the present study was to find out the difference in the level of stress among low self esteem boys and girls college students. From the results given in table number 3, it appeared that there is substantial difference in level of stress among low self-esteem boys and girls college students. The mean of stress scores were 93.37 and 105.97 respectively for low self-esteem boys and girls undergraduate college students. The results indicate that low self-esteem college boys students had significantly lower level of stress than the low self-esteem girls college students, as the difference between the two groups was found statistically significant (t= 3.30, P<0.01). Thus, hypothesis presuming significant difference in the level of stress among low self esteem boys and girls college students was found to be proved. This implies that low self-esteem undergraduate girl students were more stressful than their male counterparts of equivalent self-esteem level.

It is concluded that self-esteem plays a significant role in the level of stress in students. The study revealed that the stronger the self-esteem of the college students the lower the level of Stress faced by them. This is so as the self-esteem protects the individual from distress, it helps the person to bounce back in terms of highly stressful or pressure loaded situations. The findings of the study also showed that high self-esteem boys and girls college students were almost equal in perception of stress but low self –esteem girls students were more stressful than the low self-esteem boys students. The “significant others” in the live of low self-esteem undergraduate girls students should view both the boy and the girl child as equal and should provide them equal treatment and opportunities and positive feedback. Since self-esteem is a psychological and developmental factor, so it can be improved through good parenting. Good parenting is the foundation for a strong personality with high self-concept that can protects the adolescent from stressful situations of life. The college students should learn to relax and study hard, not panic and do well. The emphasis should be given on preparation and not on percentage.



The current study had produced some important results that have implications for educational system of India. The study demonstrated that high self-esteem had significant and positive effect on the stress tolerance capacity of the college students. So, college education should also put emphasis on life skills development in order to coach them up to meet the challenges and maximize their possibilities to live a happier and productive life.

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