

ACADEMIC INTEREST AND SELF ESTEEM: A STUDY ON GENDER DIFFERENCES AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

Interest means person focused attention towards a particular field. Academic interest means the interest of a particular study about a particular subject matter. Self-esteem is the confidence in one's capacity to achieve values and gave six poles of self esteem which are as: living consciously, self-acceptance, self-responsibility, self-assertiveness; living purposefully; personal integrity. The aim of the study is to examine the gender differences among adolescents on the basis of academic interest and self esteem. A sample of 150 adolescents ranging in the age group of 15-18 years was randomly selected from different schools of tricity and academic interest scale (Thara Sebastein, 1997) and self esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) was then administered on the selected sample. Results revealed that there exist significant positive relationship between academic interest and self esteem. It was also found that there exist significant gender differences in self esteem as males scored high on self esteem as compared to female adolescents as t ratio comes out to be 6.14, $p < 0.01$.

Keywords: Academic interest, self esteem, gender, adolescents, achievement

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The term adolescence is derived from the two latin words 'ad' and 'olescere'. ad means "toward" and olescere means "to grow or be nourished". The period of adolescence ranges between 11 to 21 years. **Holmbeck, Paikoff, and Brooks-Gunn (1995)** divides the adolescence period into three stages.

- The first stage is early adolescence (11-14 years)
- The second stage is middle adolescence (15-18 years)
- The third stage is late adolescence (19-21 years).

Academic interest means the interest of a particular study about a particular subject matter. Academic interest is the interest of a student towards educational streams which further motivate the students and takes them towards getting excellence in that academic area. Being interested is a tilt towards a specific thing. When a person is interested in something he strives to achieve the same. People often say "I love reading", "I'm interested in playing guitar" etc, all these shows people care about the thing, have positive feelings towards it. A thing in which one is interested plays an important role in his life.

Interest means person focused attention towards a particular field. Dewey (1913) argued that "if we can secure an interest in a given set of facts or ideas, we may be perfectly sure that the pupil will direct his energies towards mastering them". Dewey argued that strong interest captures person's attention and this attention leads to strong efforts to achieve a goal which may be related to academic, sports, society and curricular activity etc.

The term self-esteem comes from a Greek word meaning "reverence for self." The "self" part of self-esteem pertains to the values, beliefs and attitudes that we hold about ourselves. Murk (2006) defined self esteem on the basis of two psychological processes, the first one is evaluation and the second is affect. Evaluation means the role of cognition and thinking i.e., positive or negative self awareness about oneself and affect means the role of feelings after cognition. He defined self esteem in many perspectives, as self esteem is an attitude, it is based on the discrepancy between ideal and real self, it is the cognitive response that one feels towards one self and it is a function of personality. Higher the self esteem, more the person feel confident and then self esteem will be viewed as motivated. The discrepancy between real and ideal self means lesser the gap between the ideal and real self, higher will be the self esteem or vice versa.

Rosenberg defined self esteem as attitude i.e. positive or negative about self. According to him, people who are high on self esteem do not necessarily consider themselves in the better category from others; however they do not consider themselves to be worse than others. People with low self esteem express "self rejection, self dissatisfaction" and "self contempt" (Rosenberg, 1965). According to Rosenberg, low self esteem individuals have no respect for them and feel worthless, but they wish that they could evaluate themselves positively and worth-full.

Qualities of person who are high on self esteem

- Accept mistakes and make them as stepping stones
- Not defeated by obstacles
- Even tempered
- High on openness to experience
- Confident and optimistic

Self esteem and academic interest are somehow inter-related with each other. Academic interest develops self esteem of the adolescents or vice versa. There are many factors which affect the self esteem and academic interest of the adolescents like environmental reinforcements, motivation from parents and teachers, support from peers, parents and teachers. No doubt adolescents spend time with their friends more and share their interests, values and beliefs (Gottman, 1983). Peer support could therefore have increasingly powerful influences as the adolescents grow up.

Thus it is important to study the academic interest and self esteem of the adolescents in today's scenario. This study also examines the gender differences with academic interest and self esteem among adolescents.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Study examined by Arshad, Zaidi and Mahmood (2015) found that there was significant gender differences between academic interest and self esteem. It was also found that female students have high scores on academic performance and male students have greater scores on self esteem as compared to female students. McNeal (2014) revealed that parent and an adolescent resulted into improved academic achievement and interest.

Sadaat, Ghasemzadeh and Soleimani (2012) opined that academic self esteem and academic achievement has direct positive relationship. Peixoto (2011) evidenced that parent's harsh attitude toward their child's academic leads to low self esteem. Results also revealed that this teachers, parent's pressure loses the child's confidence and also decreases academic achievement and academic interest.

Mohammed (2010) highlighted that there exists gender differences in the academic interest and achievement. No significant differences were found in self esteem between males and females. Lane, Lane and Kyprianon (2004) investigated the relationship between self esteem and academic performance among a sample of 205 students. It was concluded that there exist direct relationship between self esteem and academic interest. It was revealed that self esteem mediated the relationship between performance accomplishments and academic performance.

Quatman and Watson (2001) studied self esteem relatively on a large sample of adolescents with N = 545 selected from class 8th, 10th and 12th. In this study investigators found gender differences in self esteem. Males were high on self esteem as compare to females. Skaalvik (1983) did a study on academic achievement, self esteem and valuing of the school. It was revealed that there was strong perceived parental pressure for boys but not for girls. It was also found that low academic achievement leads to low self esteem.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

In present scenario academic competitions among students reaches at its peak, simultaneously fear and anxiety also develops among parents and their children. Parents forces their children for hard work and always demands better scores. There are many factors which affects the students' interest in academics. Parents, teachers, peer group, internal factors directly influences the academic interest and self esteem of the adolescents. Parents motivate their children through the reinforcement techniques; teachers motivate the students with the help of teaching methods and other demonstration technique which plays an important role in students' career. There is a need to study the academic interest and self esteem of the adolescents and to find out is there any gender differences on these variables.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the academic interest among adolescents.
- To study the self esteem among adolescents.
- To study the relationship between academic interest and self esteem among adolescents.
- To study the gender differences among adolescents.

HYPOTHESES

- It is assumed that there exist positive relationship between academic interest and self esteem.
- It is hypothesized that male adolescents have more academic interest than female adolescents.
- It is hypothesized that male adolescents have higher self esteem than female adolescents.

METHODOLOGY**Sample**

A sample of 150 adolescents ranging in the age of 15-18 years was randomly selected from government schools of tricity. Academic interest scale (Thara Sebastain, 1997) and self esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) were then administered on the selected sample.

Tools Used

- Academic Interest Inventory (Thara Sebastain, 1997) was used to measure the academic interest of the adolescents. There are 35 items in this scale and all items are based on academics. The first 15 items had three response options i.e. 'Agree', 'Undecided' and 'Disagree' and for the rest 20 items, response options are 'Always', 'Sometimes' and 'Never'. 27 items are negative items and 08 items are positive. Positive items are to be scored like 2 for 'Agree/Always', 1 for 'Undecided/Sometimes' and 0 for 'Disagree/Never'. Scoring for negative items is likely to be reversed i.e. 2 for 'Disagree/Never', 1 for 'Undecided/Sometimes' and 0 for 'Agree/Always'.
- Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) was used to assess the self esteem of the adolescents. It includes 10 items and all items based on four point scale i.e. 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. Out of ten items, five items are positive and five are negative items.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Raw scores were calculated with the help of respective manuals of the scales. After calculation of raw scores descriptive statistics, t-test and correlation were used to analyze the data.

Table-1**Mean, SD and t-value of academic interest and self esteem comparing males and females adolescents**

Variables	Gender	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Academic Interest	Male	42.34	10.20	0.09	0.925
	Female	42.20	8.92		
Self Esteem	Male	29.12	3.32	6.14**	0.000
	Female	24.94	4.85		

**significant at 0.01 level

Table-1 shows the mean, SD and t-value of academic interest and self esteem comparing males and females on academic interest and self esteem. Mean and SD value of the male adolescents in academic interest comes out to be 42.34 ± 10.20 and for females it comes out to be 42.20 ± 8.92 . Value revealed that there exist no significant gender differences on the academic interest ($t = 0.09$, $p > 0.05$). Mean and SD value of the male adolescents in self esteem comes out to be 29.12 ± 3.32 and for females mean and SD found to be 24.94 ± 4.85 . These mean values show that there exist gender differences among adolescents in self esteem. Table value also depicts that there exist significant gender differences in self esteem ($t = 6.14$, $p < 0.01$). It was also revealed that males were high on self esteem as compare to females.

Previous studies also found that there exist gender differences in self esteem. Quatman and Watson (2001) also concluded that males were high on self esteem. Kwok-Wai and Sui-Mui (2005) found that there were gender differences and these gender differences exist because of the different parenting style, environment, different supported strategies by parents towards their wards. Study examined by Arshad, Zaidi and Mahmood (2015) found that there was significant gender differences between academic interest and self esteem. It was also found that female students have high scores on academic performance and male students have greater scores on self esteem as compared to female students.

Table-2**Correlation between academic interest and self esteem**

Variables	Academic Interest	Self Esteem
Academic interest	1	0.15*
Self Esteem		1

*significant at 0.05 level

Table-2 shows that there exist positive and significant relationship between academic interest and self esteem. The calculated value of correlation ($r = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$) depicts the significant relationship between the interest in academics and the self esteem. Booth and Gerard (2011) also found the same results and concluded that self-esteem was related to academic achievement and academic interest. Lane, Lane and Kyprianon (2004) investigated the relationship between self esteem and academic performance among a sample of 205 students. It was concluded that there exist direct relationship between self esteem and

academic interest. It was revealed that self esteem mediated the relationship between performance accomplishments and academic performance.

IMPLICATIONS

Research has clear implications for parents, teachers, special educators and students. Research revealed that there exist positive correlation between self esteem and academic interest. Parents can enhance the self esteem of their children and it automatically raises the academic interest. In today's Indian education system adolescents faces so much competition and struggle for their better future even after completing their qualifications. There are vast and huge syllabus at the school levels and has many academic fields. Education system may be like more towards learning oriented with concept clarity rather than learning by rote, it should be like creative and practical activity not a burden on students.

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