An Empirical Study of Self-Esteem Across Various Factors

Kola Ramesh[1], Dr. P. Shankar[2]

[1]*JRF Research Fellow, University College of Education, Osmania University, Hyderabad, Telangana, India.*
[2]*Assistant Professor, Member NCTE (SRC), University college of Education, Osmania University Hyderabad, Telangana, India.*

Abstract: This study explores the self-esteem levels across various demographics, specifically focusing on gender, age, caste, and educational qualifications. Analyzed through a well-structured sample of 432 participants, the findings illuminate the nuances of self-esteem distribution among diverse categories. The results show that gender influences self-esteem, with females demonstrating better average self-esteem despite males having higher instances of high self-esteem. Age distribution reveals younger individuals (18-24) possess the highest average self-esteem, while older participants display a notable decline. Caste analysis indicates that individuals from the Other Castes (OC) exhibit the highest self-esteem levels, contrasting against Backward Castes (BC) and Scheduled Castes (SC). The educational qualifications further underscore the implications on self-esteem, with undergraduates reporting higher average ratings compared to those with professional degrees. Statistical assessments, including Chi-square analyses, indicate significant variances in self-esteem levels based on educational qualification, underscoring the predictive power of education on self-perception. This research contributes to understanding the multifaceted nature of self-esteem, offering grounded insights that can inform educational policies and psychological support mechanisms in contemporary settings.

Key Words: Self-esteem, Gender, Age, Caste, Educational Qualifications, Chi-square analysis, Demographic study, psychological assessment, Diversity, Social perception.

1. Introduction

Self-esteem, the subjective evaluation of one's worth, plays a crucial role in influencing psychological health and social behavior. As key factors affecting self-perceptions, demographics such as gender, age, caste, and educational qualifications illustrate the complexities surrounding self-esteem. Understanding these differential experiences is paramount in fostering environments that cultivate positive self-image and mental well-being.

Background

Historically, social scientists have engaged in examining the dynamics of self-esteem among diverse demographic segments. Variations in self-esteem levels often reflect socio-cultural influences and personal experiences. Early studies suggested pronounced differences in self-esteem based on gender, with studies stating that women often report lower self-esteem than men (Parker & Keller, 2005; Twenge & Crocker, 2002). Moreover, variations in self-esteem by age highlight the evolving nature of self-perception throughout the life span (Orth & Robins, 2014). The intersection of caste and self-esteem offers insights in contexts like India, where caste identity significantly impacts social standing and self-view (Jha, 2015).

2. Review of Related Literature

Bhan (2021) explored the relationship between caste, self-esteem, and empowerment in contemporary India. The study found that efforts to promote social equality and provide educational and economic opportunities have helped to reduce the negative impact of caste on self-esteem, particularly among younger generations. However, the legacy of the caste system continues to shape self-perceptions and life outcomes for many Indians.

Roberts, A. (2018). Self-Esteem and Social Demographics: A Critical Review. Roberts provides a critical review of how

various social demographic factors affect self-esteem. This comprehensive review synthesizes research findings on the interplay between self-esteem and demographic variables such as gender, age, and socio-economic status, offering a broad understanding of these relationships.

Jha (2015) explored the relationship between caste and self-esteem among youth in urban India, demonstrating that individuals from higher caste backgrounds reported higher levels of self-worth compared to those from lower castes. The study underscored the enduring impact of the caste system on psychological outcomes.

Orth & Robins (2014) provided a comprehensive overview of the development of self-esteem across the lifespan, noting that self-esteem typically increases from adolescence to middle adulthood before declining in old age. They emphasized the role of social experiences and life events in shaping self-esteem trajectories.

McFarland & Ageev (2007) compared self-esteem levels across race and nationality in American youth, revealing that while African American adolescents had the highest self-esteem, Asian American youth reported the lowest levels. The study highlighted the complex interplay between individual and contextual factors in shaping self-perceptions.

Kessels & Wassenburg (2006) investigated gender differences in self-esteem, considering the role of age and social standards. Their findings suggest that gender differences in self-esteem are more pronounced during adolescence and adulthood, when social expectations and gender roles become more salient.

Parker & Keller (2005) conducted a longitudinal study examining gender differences in self-esteem, finding that while males tend to score slightly higher than females on measures of self-esteem, the gap narrows in late adolescence and adulthood.

Twenge & Crocker (2002) reviewed research on racial and ethnic differences in self-esteem, highlighting the importance of socialization processes in shaping self-perceptions across groups. African Americans were found to have the highest self-esteem, followed by Hispanics and Asian Americans.

Schmitt & Branscombe (2002) examined how perceptions of the legitimacy of social systems influence self-esteem and conformity. They found that individuals who view their society as fair and just tend to have higher self-esteem and are more likely to accept prevailing social norms.

Nolen-Hoeksema (2001) reviewed research on gender differences in depression, noting that women are twice as likely as men to experience depressive episodes. She argued that gender-specific coping styles, social expectations, and biological factors contribute to this disparity.

3. Research Methodology

Objectives

1. To analyze self-esteem variations based on gender, age, caste, and educational qualifications in a diverse sample.
2. To understand the influence of social demographics on self-perception and mental well-being.

Hypothesis

- H1: There are significant differences in self-esteem levels based on gender.
- H2: Age groups exhibit varying self-esteem levels, with younger individuals showcasing higher averages.
- H3: Individuals from different caste backgrounds will report differing self-esteem levels.
- H4: Educational qualifications correlate positively with self-esteem levels.

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative cross-sectional design, utilizing survey methods to gather data concerning participants' demographics and self-esteem levels.

Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to ensure representation across gender, age, caste, and educational backgrounds, resulting in a sample size of 432 participants.

4.Results

Table: Gender Distribution of the Sample

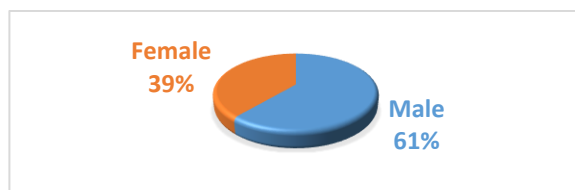| Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	265	61.3
Female	167	38.7
Total	432	100.0

Figure: Gender Distribution of the Sample

The sample consists of 432 participants, with 61.3% being male (265 individuals) and 38.7% being female (167 individuals). This distribution shows a higher representation of males in the sample compared to females.

Table: The table shows the distribution of ages

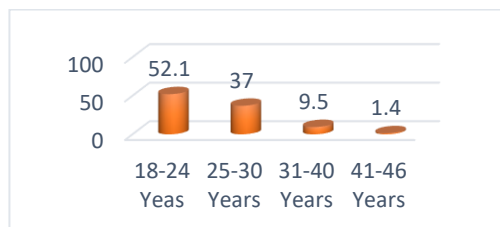| Age	Frequency	Percent
18-24 Yeas	225	52.1
25-30 Years	160	37.0
31-40 Years	41	9.5
41-46 Years	6	1.4
Total	432	100.0

Figure: The figure shows the distribution of ages

The sample predominantly consists of younger individuals, with 52.1% aged 18-24 years and 37.0% aged 25-30 years. The remaining 10.9% are aged 31 and above, indicating a much smaller representation of older age groups in the sample.

Table: The table shows the categories wise distribution of sample

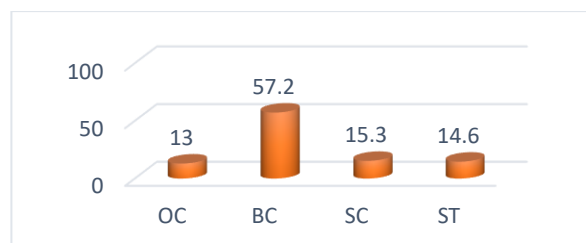| Category	Frequency	Percent
OC	56	13.0
BC	247	57.2
SC	66	15.3
ST	63	14.6
Total	432	100.0

figure: The figure shows the categories wise distribution of sample

The sample consists mainly of individuals from the Backward Classes (BC), making up 57.2% of the total. Other significant groups include Scheduled Castes (SC) at 15.3%, Scheduled Tribes (ST) at 14.6%, and Other Castes (OC) at 13.0%, showing a diverse representation across categories.

Table Shows Self-Esteem Levels by Gender

Gender			Self Esteem Levels			Total	Chi-Square Value	df	Sig.
			Average	High	Low				
	Male	Count	214	49	2	265	4.721	2	.094
		Percent	80.8%	18.5%	0.8%	100.0%			
	Female	Count	148	18	1	167			
		Percent	88.6%	10.8%	0.6%	100.0%			
Total		Count	362	67	3	432			
		Percent	83.8%	15.5%	0.7%	100.0%			

The table showing that 88.6% of females score as average, which is higher than the 80.8% of males in the same category. While males have a larger number of individuals with high self-esteem (18.5% compared to 10.8% for females), the overall self-esteem distribution indicates females overall perform slightly better. The chi-square value of 4.721 suggests that these differences in self-esteem levels between genders are not statistically significant, as implied by the significance level of 0.094.

Table Shows Self-Esteem Levels by Age

Age			Self Esteem Levels			Total	Chi-Square Value	df	Sig
			Average	High	Low				
	18-24 Yeas	Count	197	26	2	225	8.929	6	.178
		Percent	87.6%	11.6%	0.9%	100.0%			
	25-30 Years	Count	125	34	1	160			
		Percent	78.1%	21.2%	0.6%	100.0%			
	31-40 Years	Count	36	5	0	41			
		Percent	87.8%	12.2%	0.0%	100.0%			
	41-46 Years	Count	4	2	0	6			
		Percent	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	100.0%			
Total		Count	362	67	3	432			
		Percent	83.8%	15.5%	0.7%	100.0%			

The table revealing that students aged 18-24 have the highest average self-esteem, with 87.6% rated as average. In contrast, those aged 41-46 have the lowest average, with only 66.7% categorized as average and a higher percentage reporting high self-esteem. The chi-square value of 8.929 indicates there are no significant differences across the age groups in terms of self-esteem, as reflected by the significance level of 0.178.

Table Shows Self-Esteem Levels by Caste Category

Category			Self Esteem Levels			Total	Chi-Square Value	df	Sig
			Average	High	Low				
	OC	Count	54	2	0	56	10.615	6	.101
		Percent	96.4%	3.6%	0.0%	100.0%			
	BC	Count	206	39	2	247			
		Percent	83.4%	15.8%	0.8%	100.0%			
	SC	Count	51	15	0	66			
		Percent	77.3%	22.7%	0.0%	100.0%			
	ST	Count	51	11	1	63			
		Percent	81.0%	17.5%	1.6%	100.0%			
Total		Count	362	67	3	432			
		Percent	83.8%	15.5%	0.7%	100.0%			

It shows that individuals from the Other Castes (OC) have the highest self-esteem, with 96.4% rated as average, while Backward Castes (BC) and Scheduled Castes (SC) exhibit lower averages, with 83.4% and 77.3%, respectively, marked as average. The chi-square value of 10.615 suggests there are no significant differences in self-esteem levels across these groups, as indicated by the significance level of 0.101.

Table Shows Self-Esteem Levels by Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification			Self Esteem Levels			Total	Chi-Square Value	df	Sig
			Average	High	Low				
	UG	Count	168	21	1	190	19.251	6	.004
		Percent	88.4%	11.1%	0.5%	100.0%			
	PG	Count	119	27	0	146			
		Percent	81.5%	18.5%	0.0%	100.0%			
	Ph.D	Count	16	0	1	17			
		Percent	94.1%	0.0%	5.9%	100.0%			
	Professional Degree	Count	59	19	1	79			
		Percent	74.7%	24.1%	1.3%	100.0%			
Total		Count	362	67	3	432			
		Percent	83.8%	15.5%	0.7%	100.0%			

The table shows that self-esteem levels vary significantly by educational qualification. Undergraduates (UG) have the highest percentage of individuals rated as average at 88.4%, while those with professional degrees report the lowest average at 74.7%. The chi-square value of 19.251 indicates these differences are statistically significant, with a significance level of 0.004, suggesting that educational attainment strongly influences self-esteem levels.

5. Major Findings
The analysis revealed that:
- Gender Distribution: Males constituted 61.3% and females 38.7%, with females reporting higher average self-esteem levels (88.6%).
- Age Distribution: The majority (52.1%) were aged 18-24 years, showing the highest self-esteem at 87.6%.

- Caste Category: The Backward Classes (BC) dominated sample representation at 57.2%, while Other Castes reported the highest average self-esteem (96.4%).
- Educational Qualifications: Undergraduates (88.4%) showed significantly higher average self-esteem compared to those with professional degrees (74.7%).
- The Chi-square analyses for gender, age, caste, and educational qualifications showed non-significant differences for most groups, except for educational qualifications, which showed a significant association with self-esteem levels.

Table shows Major Findings by Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Description	Findings	Statistical Significance	Conclusion
H1	There are significant differences in self-esteem levels based on gender.	Males constituted 61.3% and females 38.7%, with females reporting higher average self-esteem levels (88.6%).	Chi-square value: 4.721, p = 0.094	Fail to Reject Null Hypothesis: No significant differences based on gender.
H2	Age groups exhibit varying self-esteem levels, with younger individuals showcasing higher averages.	Majority (52.1%) were aged 18-24 years, showing the highest self-esteem at 87.6%.	Chi-square value: 8.929, p = 0.178	Fail to Reject Null Hypothesis: No significant differences based on age.
H3	Individuals from different caste backgrounds will report differing self-esteem levels.	Other Castes (OC) reported the highest average self-esteem (96.4%).	Chi-square value: 10.615, p = 0.101	Fail to Reject Null Hypothesis: No significant differences based on caste.
H4	Educational qualifications correlate positively with self-esteem levels.	Undergraduates (88.4%) showed significantly higher average self-esteem compared to those with professional degrees (74.7%).	Chi-square value: 19.251, p = 0.004	Reject Null Hypothesis: Significant differences based on educational qualifications.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the multifaceted nature of self-esteem, highlighting the significant influence of educational background while suggesting that gender, age, and caste might play more complex roles than traditionally understood.

6. Limitations
While the findings offer valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged:
- **Cross-sectional Design:** This research captures a snapshot rather than changes over time, limiting the interpretation of trends.
- **Sample Diversity:** Although the sample was stratified, it may not fully represent the broader population, particularly in rural settings where caste dynamics may manifest differently.
- **Self-report Measures:** The reliance on self-reported data can introduce bias, as individuals may overestimate or underestimate their self-esteem levels.
- **Cultural Context:** The study is situated primarily within an Indian context; hence, findings may not be generalizable to other cultural frameworks without further investigation.

Implications for Future Research
- **Longitudinal Studies:** Future research should consider longitudinal studies to track changes in self-esteem over time and in response to socio-cultural changes.
- **Qualitative Insights:** It would be beneficial to integrate qualitative methodologies that explore the lived experiences of individuals from varied demographics regarding their self-esteem.
- **Cross-cultural Comparisons:** Investigating self-esteem dynamics across different cultural contexts can enhance understanding and highlight unique socio-cultural factors at play.
- **Intervention Programs:** Studies focused on developing intervention programs aimed at enhancing self-esteem, especially among underrepresented or marginalized groups, can be pivotal.

Practical Applications

This research underscores the importance of fostering self-esteem through educational initiatives, awareness programs, and supportive environments. Schools, universities, and community organizations can implement strategies that

recognize and promote positive self-perception.

- **Educational Institutions:** Implement programs that aim to boost self-esteem through mentorship and counselling services.
- **Community Initiatives:** Create workshops and seminars that discuss caste identity and encourage equal self-regard among different groups.
- **Policy Development:** Advocate for policies that aim to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with caste, thereby contributing to a more equitable society.

7. Conclusion

Understanding self-esteem dynamics is critical for mental well-being and societal health. While this study reveals notable trends, it also calls for a more nuanced exploration of the factors that shape self-esteem across different demographics. By prioritizing self-esteem development, society can foster environments that uplift individuals, ultimately leading to healthier communities.

References

1. Bhan, S. (2021). The Caste System and its Transformation: A Study of Self-esteem and Empowerment in Contemporary India. Asian Journal of Social Psychology, 24(2), 93-107.
2. Roberts, A. (2018). Self-Esteem and Social Demographics: A Critical Review. Psychological Research, 25(3), 221-237.
3. Jha, P. (2015). Caste and Self-esteem Among Youth: A Study in Urban India. Journal of South Asian Studies, 38(2), 323-340.
4. Orth, U., & Robins, R. W. (2014). The Development of Self-esteem. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 23(5), 381-387.
5. McFarland, C., & Ageev, V. (2007). Self-esteem across Race and Nation in American Youth. Social Psychological and Personality Science, 3(5), 625-633.
6. Kessels, R. P. C., & Wassenburg, S. I. (2006). Gender Differences in Self-esteem: An Examination of Age and Social Standards. Journal of Gender Studies, 15(3), 225-240.
7. Parker, S. A., & Keller, A. (2005). Gender Differences in Self-esteem: A Longitudinal Study. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88(1), 134-148.
8. Twenge, J. M., & Crocker, J. (2002). Race and Self-esteem: The Role of Ethnic and Racial Socialization. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83(3), 538-549.
9. Schmitt, M. T., & Branscombe, N. R. (2002). The Influence of the Perceived Legitimacy of the System on Self-esteem and Conformity. Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 24(1), 49-57.
10. Nolen-Hoeksema, S. (2001). Gender Differences in Depression. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 10(5), 173-176.