

Self-Esteem Among College Students in India

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Abstract

The study aimed to explore and compare the Self-esteem levels in undergraduate students and postgraduate students in India, specifically Bengaluru area. This was conducted using a Google form questionnaire on 120 participants (30 male and 30 female undergraduate students, 30 male, and 30 female postgraduate students) studying in Bengaluru falling in the age group of 18-26. From the results obtained on a t-test, it was found that there is a difference of 0.141463054 between undergraduate and postgraduate students and a difference of 1.09315E-20 between male students and female students, which disproves the hypotheses set. While girls tend to develop emotions related to internalizing problems, boys tend to develop emotions related to externalizing them. Postgraduate students show a higher level of self-esteem compared to undergraduate students.

Keywords: Self-esteem, Undergraduate students, Postgraduate students

Introduction

Origin and Meaning of the term self-esteem

Self-esteem is the subjective sense of personal worth or value, encompassing positive or negative evaluations of oneself. It reflects an individual's overall attitude toward themselves, irrespective of external circumstances. Originally discussed by David Hume in the 18th century, self-esteem gained prominence through the works of William James, who distinguished between the "I-self" and "Me-self" (Sprecher et al., 2013). Morris Rosenberg's self-esteem scale became a pivotal tool in its assessment. While behaviorism initially dismissed introspective research, the mid-20th century saw a resurgence of interest in self-esteem with the emergence of phenomenology and humanistic psychology (Rosenberg, 1965).

Self-esteem: an essential component of a healthy personality

Orth and Robins (2014) highlight the crucial role of self-esteem in healthy personality development. Psychologists increasingly recognize its association with various aspects of well-being and adjustment. Understanding the predictive value of self-esteem is essential for enhancing the well-being of college students (Chao, 2012). Self-esteem, viewed through various psychological models, plays a pivotal role in an individual's identity formation, societal interactions, and overall mental health. High self-esteem is linked to positive emotions, life satisfaction, and effective coping mechanisms, while low self-esteem contributes to increased sensitivity to external judgments and heightened stress levels (Meszaros & De Wals, 2011).

Gender Differences associated with self-esteem among college students

Research on gender differences in self-esteem yields contradictory findings. While studies suggest higher self-esteem in males, others report minimal gender differences (Orth & Robins, 2014; Coopersmith, 1967).

Exploring gender-related aspects of self-esteem is crucial, considering societal expectations and the impact on self-conscious emotions (Yang et al., 2019). Given the complex challenges faced by college students, including academic pressures and identity formation, self-esteem emerges as a crucial factor in promoting happiness and well-being. The positive correlation between self-esteem and life satisfaction underscores its significance in fostering positive functioning among adolescents (Sprecher et al., 2013).

In summary, understanding the intricate dynamics of self-esteem is essential for promoting positive well-being, especially among college students facing diverse challenges. This study seeks to delve into the nuances of self-esteem among undergraduate and postgraduate students in Bengaluru, aiming to contribute valuable insights to psychological research.

Methodology

Research Design

The research used a quantitative approach to understand the similarities and differences in the self-esteem levels of undergraduate and postgraduate students in Bengaluru. The sample comprised of 120 participants. The sample was collected from 60 undergraduate students (30 male and 30 female students) and 60 postgraduate students (30 male and 30 female students) via google form questionnaire and the results were analyzed and interpreted using a t-test analysis.

Statement of Problem

To compare the self-esteem levels in undergraduate and postgraduate students in Bengaluru.

Objectives of Study

1. To assess the level of self-esteem in undergraduate students
2. To assess the level of self-esteem in postgraduate students
3. To compare the self-esteem levels of undergraduate and postgraduate students
4. To compare the self-esteem levels of male students and female students.

Hypothesis

H₀ 1: There is no significant difference in the self-esteem level of undergraduate and postgraduate students.

H₀ 2: There is no significant difference in the self-esteem level of male and female students.

Variables

Independent variable: undergraduate students, postgraduate students

Dependent variable: Self-esteem

Operational Definitions:

- **Self-esteem:** According to Rosenberg (1965), self-esteem is one's positive or negative attitude toward oneself and one's evaluation of one's thoughts and feelings overall concerning oneself.
- **Undergraduate students:** An undergraduate student is a student who is pursuing a degree at the first level of higher education at a college or university

- **Postgraduate students:** A student who has obtained a degree from a university, etc, and is pursuing studies for a more advanced qualification.

Population of the study

Undergraduate and postgraduate students between the age group of 18-26.

Geographical Area

Bengaluru, Karnataka.

Sample

In the present study, a sample of 120 students (30 male and 30 female undergraduate students, 30 male, and 30 female postgraduate students) studying in Bengaluru falling in the age group of 18-26.

Sampling technique

The population selected for the study were undergraduate and postgraduate students from Bengaluru. The age group ranged from 18-26. The sampling technique used was non-probabilistic, convenient, and purposive in nature. Non-probability sampling is a sampling method in which not all members of the population have an equal chance of participating in the study. Each member of the population has a known chance of being selected. A convenience sample is drawn from a source that is conveniently accessible to the researcher. A purposive sample is one whose characteristics are defined for a purpose that is relevant to the study. All respondents were provided with an informed consent form after which they proceeded to answer the questionnaire.

Inclusion criteria

- People belonging to the age group of 18-26
- College-going students from Bengaluru
- Undergraduate and postgraduate students
- Male and female students

Exclusion criteria

- The study excluded students from other parts of the world
- People who were aged below 18 and above 26
- Genders other than male and female
- School-going students (even if aged 18)
- Working population
- Physically and mentally challenged individuals

Procedure

The researcher took permission from each participant to meet the inclusion criteria before beginning the study. Data was collected via a google form questionnaire. The participants were asked to fill the consent form. This form entails the willingness to participate in the research voluntarily along with ethical considerations regarding their participation in the study which includes confidentiality of the data they fill in, freedom to withdraw from the study at any point in time. After the participants agreed to participate in

the study, they proceeded to fill the Google-form questionnaire. The data was collected from a sample of 120 students from various parts of Bengaluru and was later analyzed on Microsoft excel using t-test analysis, a type of inferential statistic method used to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of two groups, which may be related to certain features. A t-test is used as a hypothesis testing tool, which allows testing of an assumption applicable to a population.

Research Ethics followed

- The researcher debriefed the participants about the purpose of the study
- The instructions were given and explained to the participants
- The participants were notified that the details, information, and results will be used only for research purpose

Tools used

1. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) by Morris Rosenberg (1965)- It is a self-report measure of global self-esteem developed by Dr. Morris Rosenberg in 1965. It consists of 10 statements related to overall feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. The items are answered on a four-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. To score the items, the value to each of the 10 items as follows: For items 1,2,4,6,7: Strongly Agree=3, Agree=2, Disagree=1, and Strongly Disagree=0. For items 3,5,8,9,10 (which are reversed in valence): Strongly Agree=0, Agree=1, Disagree=2, and Strongly Disagree=3. The scores are interpreted as 0-15 Low Self Esteem, 15-25 Normal Self-Esteem and 25-30 High Self-Esteem.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptives of Self-Esteem

	UG	PG	Male	Female
Mean	17.8	19.1	28.37	18.56
Median	18	19	29	18
Mode	17	18	29	18
SD	5.59	3.56	4.83	4.55
Sum	1070	1146	1699	1114
Count	60	60	60	60

The decriptives of the undergraduates' self-esteem- Mean=17.8, Median=18, Mode=17, Standard Deviation=5.59, postgraduates' self-esteem- Mean=19.1, Median=19, Mode=18, Standard Deviation=3.56, male self-esteem- Mean=28.37, Median=29, Mode=29, Standard Deviation=4.83, female self-esteem- Mean=18.56, Median=18, Mode=18, Standard Deviation=4.55.

T-Test – Testing the Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the self-esteem level of undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Table 2: Difference in the self-esteem level of undergraduate and postgraduate students.

	UG Self-esteem	PG Self-esteem
Mean	17.83333333	19.1
Variance	31.15819209	12.66779661
Observations	60	60
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	100	
t Stat	-1.482081567	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.070731527	
t Critical one-tail	1.660234326	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.141463054	
t Critical two-tail	1.983971519	

The above table shows the t-test analysis of the self-esteem level of undergraduate and postgraduate students. The mean score of self-esteem level of postgraduate students(M=19.1) is greater than the mean score of self-esteem level of undergraduate students(M=17.83333333). There is a significant difference found in the self-esteem level of undergraduate and postgraduate students which is 0.141463054. This disproves the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the self-esteem level of undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the self-esteem level of male students and female students.

Table 3 shows the differences in the self-esteem level of male students and female students.

	Male Self-esteem	Female Self-esteem
Mean	28.31666667	18.56666667
Variance	23.33870056	20.75819209
Observations	60	60
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	118	
t Stat	11.37303164	
P(T<=t) one-tail	5.46573E-21	
t Critical one-tail	1.657869522	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.09315E-20	
t Critical two-tail	1.980272249	

The above table shows the t-test analysis of the self-esteem level of male students and female students. The mean score of self-esteem level of male students(M=28.31666667) is greater than the mean score of self-esteem level of female students(M=18.56666667). There is a significant difference found in the self-esteem level of male and female students which is 1.09315E-20. This disproves the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the self-esteem level of male and female students.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to assess and compare the self-esteem levels of undergraduate and postgraduate students in Bengaluru. Based on the objectives there were 2 hypotheses formed. Responses were collected from the participants via google form questionnaire, the raw scores obtained were grouped into two. One was based on the level of education (undergraduate and postgraduate students) and the second was based on the gender of the students (male and female).

The scores were analyzed in Microsoft excel using a t-test and the hypotheses were tested. Hypothesis 1 stated that there is no significant difference in the self-esteem level of undergraduate and postgraduate students. Based on the study conducted and the results obtained, it is observed that there is a significant difference of 0.141463054 in their self-esteem levels which disproved the hypothesis set. Hypothesis 2 stated that there is no significant difference in the self-esteem level of male and female students. Based on the study conducted and the results obtained, it is observed that there is a significant difference of 1.09315E-20 in their self-esteem levels which disproved the hypothesis set.

Based on the study conducted, the self-esteem level of male students is higher than female students. Gender roles may have an influence on self-esteem. While self-confidence is a stereotypical male feature, the presentation of self-confidence by girls is considered a breach of traditional gender roles (Chao, 2012). Therefore, it is not surprising that boys report higher self-esteem than girls. Boys are more likely to be in situations that encourage competition, conflict, power, and excitement, whereas girls are more likely to encounter situations of self-disclosure, support, and co-rumination (Sprecher et al., 2013). While girls tend to develop emotions related to internalizing problems, boys tend to develop emotions related to externalizing them. This gender gap emerges in adolescence and persists throughout early and middle adulthood before it narrows and disappears in old age.

From the results, we can also infer that there is a significant difference in the self-esteem levels of undergraduate and postgraduate students. Postgraduate students show a higher level of self-esteem when compared with undergraduate students. This could be because the postgraduate students are now moving from early adulthood to middle adulthood, they might have gone through many experiences which helped them in building a firm self-esteem and an overall self-concept by now, higher education provides students with constant growth opportunities to develop and strengthen self-esteem and self-confidence, particularly in situations where they must communicate with others and learn new information and skills (Chao, 2012), so postgraduate students demonstrate improved self-understanding, which also strengthens their academic, social, and general self-concept and self-esteem whereas, the undergraduate students are in their late adolescence and early adulthood, a phase of life where self-esteem is being built.

Colleges encourage students to develop a greater sense of independence and feelings of control over their lives, which then influences the development of other skills, such as communication, planning, decision-making, and leadership by organizing different fests and competitions (Orth & Robins, 2014). However, implementing a reward system, academic assistance, special rewards, scholarship and other supports, might show the undergraduate students that the college cares for them and they are important. Students should also develop a sense of belongingness which will increase their self-esteem.

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to understand the similarities and differences in the self-esteem levels of undergraduate and postgraduate students in Bengaluru. The results disproved the hypotheses set, which stated that there is no difference in the self-esteem level of undergraduate students and postgraduates, there is no difference in the self-esteem level of male students and female students, as there was a significant difference in the self-esteem level of undergraduate students and postgraduates, and in the self-esteem level of male and female students.

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