



The Impact of Gender, Age and Academic Branch on Self-Esteem of Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to study the impact of gender, age and academic branch on the self-esteem and its dimensions among students. The sample size of this study consists of 206 students (101 female and 105 male) that were selected at random from Sistan and Baluchestan University. The Self-esteem Scale was used to collect the data. To compare the mean scores of female and male students independent t-test was used and results revealed that male students significantly showed higher mean scores on academic performance and total scores of self-esteem than female students, but there was no emerged any significant difference between male and female students on social evaluation and appearance. Results of One Way ANOVA did not reveal any significant difference on self-esteem and its dimensions with regard to age and academic branch. According to results of this study practitioners and researchers should pay more attention to these differences and promote the academic performance and enhance the self-esteem of female students.

KEY WORDS: Self-esteem, Gender, Age, Academic Branch and Students.

INTRODUCTION

Social psychologists conceptualized the self-esteem as our total attitudes toward ourselves. It refers to the degree to which we perceive ourselves positively or negatively (Baron et al., 2010). Rosenberg (1965) defines the self-esteem in terms of “a stable sense of personal worth or worthiness”. Branden (1969) defined self-esteem as “the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and being worthy of happiness”. Many early theorists expressed that self-esteem is a basic need or motivation for human beings. In Maslow’s (1987) hierarchy of needs, he emphasized on self-esteem in his theory. He introduced two different types of esteem: “the need for respect from others and the need for self-respect, or inner self-esteem. Respect from others entails recognition, acceptance, status, and appreciation, and was believed to be more fragile and easily lost than inner self-esteem”. Without the gratification of the self-esteem need, individuals will be driven to seek it and unable to grow and achieve self-actualization. From 1970 to 1990 some researchers and practitioners assumed as a matter of course that students' self-esteem acted as a critical factor in the grades that they obtain in their school, in their relationships with their peers, and in their later success in life. According to this assumption, some people created programs that aimed to enhance the self-esteem among students. Till 1990s there was a little research about students' self-esteem.

Gender Differences and Self-Esteem

Some studies showed that gender has impact on self-esteem, for example, Butterfield (1999) demonstrated that there were statistically significant differences in self-esteem by gender on the academic competence scale, peer popularity scale, and personal security scale. Investigators discussed that girls have higher scores in some dimensions of self-esteem than boys; in a study Kumru et al. (2007) revealed that adolescents with high self-esteem and girls had higher scores in peer attachments and more pro-social friends. Kearney (1999) emphasized that biological, cognitive, social, and environmental factors all contribute to influence an adolescent's personal development and self-esteem. He explains that adolescent girls tend to have lower self-esteem and more negative assessments of their physical characteristics and intellectual abilities than boys have. According to Frome and Eccles (1996) perceiving oneself as feminine was positively related to self-esteem for females and perceiving oneself as masculine was positively related to self-esteem for males. Williams and Best (1990) compared the self-concept of

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male and female in fourteen nation. In nations, like India and Malaysia where female are expected to stay at home in their roles as wives and mothers, female have the most negative self-concepts, but in nations like England and Finland, where women are most active in the labor force and the status difference between women and men is less. McMullin and Cairney (2004) showed that women have lower levels of self-esteem than do men. Some studies did not show any significant difference between male and female on self-esteem. In a study Patton, Bartrum and Creed (2004) revealed that there were no significant differences between males and females on self-esteem. Major et al. (1999) found out that the differences between male and female was less among individual who are in the professional classes and it is more among middle and lower class.

Age Level and Self-Esteem

Age is one of the main demographic factors that have extensive effect on self-esteem, over the past century, many of studies have examined the development of self-esteem, but these studies did not consider the age difference in self-concept. For twenty years back, Wylie (1979) studied a large review of the self-esteem literature and revealed that there are not existed systematic age differences in self-esteem. Studies illustrated that self-esteem levels are high in childhood, drops during adolescence, rises gradually throughout adulthood, and declines sharply in elderly (Robins et al., 2002). Marsh (1989) demonstrated that self-concept decreases from early preadolescence to middle adolescence, then increased through early adulthood. Sex differences in specific areas of self-concept were generally consistent with sex stereotypes and relatively stable from preadolescence to early adulthood. Researchers have revealed that physical appearance and sexual orientation gradually take on more importance across the late preadolescent and adolescent periods (Bracken, 1996). O' Malley and Bachman (1983) discussed that the global self-esteem increases in mean levels and stability over the life span, specifically at late adolescence and early adulthood. McCarthy and Hoge (1982) believe that there is an increase in self-concept scores, especially during the ages 13 to 18 years old. According to Kling, Hyde, Showers and Buswell (1999) some of these incongruity are due to gender differences that emerge at this age, particularly the tendency for males to have higher self-esteem than females. Some researchers showed that self-esteem remains stable or increases by increasing of individual's age, and some researcher discuss that self-esteem decreases, and some of the authors reveal that there is a U-shaped relationship between age and self-esteem (Giarrusso, Mabry and Bengtson, 2001).

Academic Branch and Self-Esteem

There is seen rare research about the impact of academic branch on self-esteem. Marsh and Yeung (1997b) showed that self-concept had significant effects on high school students' selection of coursework. Psillos, Preege and Bligh (1984) investigated the self-esteem as physics teachers of students taking pre-service physics teacher education courses before and after the courses. Results revealed that students who dropped out from the courses had lower self-esteem than either the students who satisfactorily completed them or similarly qualified students who did not take the courses. O'Hare (1995) found out that women enter engineering reporting high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. In a study Harris (2009) revealed that respondents with high cumulative and engineering GPA's were found to have higher levels of self-esteem. Some studies there were not found out relationship between self-esteem and academic success in African American students (van Laar, 2000).

Furthermore, future research should address these limitations and should include an analysis of the academic branch impact on self-esteem. Studies around the world have shown that many factors, as earlier we discussed in literature of review, have impact on self-esteem, so the present study aims to study the impact of gender, age level and academic branch on self-esteem of students in the University of Sistan and Baluchestan (Iran).

METHOD

Sample:

The sample comprises of 206 students (101 female and 105 male) that were selected at random from three faculties (131 Art and Humanities students, 42 Engineering students, and 33 Science students) of Sistan and Baluchestan University. The age group ranged from 20 or less to 35 years (mean age=23.60 and S.D=2.77). The whole sample size of this research is given in table-1.

Table-1: Showing Sample Size of Research

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Age	Frequency	Percent	Academic Branch	Frequency	Percent
Female	101	49	20 or less	41	19.9	Arts & Humanities	131	63.6
Male	105	51	21-25	116	56.3	Engineering	42	20.4
Total	206	100.0	26-35	49	23.8	Science	33	16.0
			Total	206	100.0	Total	206	100.0

Procedure:

The study was conducted in three faculties (Art and Humanities, Engineering, and Science) of Sistan and Baluchestan University. After selection the adequate sample, scales and questionnaires were given to participants and before responding to questions the instructions for each part of the scale were adequately explained. The respondents were also assured that their participation in the study was voluntary and their responses would remain confidential and used for research purpose only.

Tools Used:

Self-esteem Scale

This scale was constructed by Heatherton and Polivy (1991) to assess the self-esteem of students. There are three self-esteem factors in the State Self-Esteem Scale: Academic Performance, Social Evaluation, and Appearance. Each item is scored on a scale from 1 to 5 with larger numbers indicating higher self-esteem. Coefficient Alpha for whole Scale = .92 (Equal for Males and Females). In the current research reliability of scale by using Coefficient Alpha for overall scale was found out to be .7177.

RESULTS

Table-2: Showing Mean, S.D and t value on Self-esteem and its Dimensions

Variable	Gender	Mean	S.D.	t value
Academic performance	Female	16.4554	3.7511	-2.823**
	Male	18.0381	4.2673	
Social evaluation	Female	16.7723	7.5603	-1.147
	Male	17.7143	3.6234	
Appearance	Female	15.1188	3.3624	.864
	Male	15.5429	3.6691	
Overall Self-esteem	Female	48.3465	11.2164	-2.019*
	Male	51.2952	9.7141	

**p<0.01, *p<0.05

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the self-esteem and its dimensions for males and females. There was significant difference in scores for males and females on academic performance [t(204) = - 2.823, p<0.01]. Male students showed higher mean scores on academic performance in comparison to female students. Also, there was emerged significant difference in scores for males and females on overall scores of self-esteem [t(204) = -2.019, p<0.05]. But there was not any significant difference between two groups on social evaluation and appearance.

Table-3: Showing Summary of One Way ANOVA on Self-esteem and Its Dimensions with Regard to Academic Branch

Variable	Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Academic Performance	Between Groups	80.645	2	40.323	2.444	.089
	Within Groups	3349.199	203	16.499		
	Total	3429.845	205			
Social Evaluation	Between Groups	84.643	2	42.321	1.220	.297
	Within Groups	7042.231	203	34.691		
	Total	7126.874	205			
Appearance	Between Groups	23.291	2	11.646	.939	.393
	Within Groups	2516.597	203	12.397		
	Total	2539.888	205			
Overall Self-esteem	Between Groups	514.785	2	257.393	2.340	.099
	Within Groups	22327.550	203	109.988		
	Total	22842.335	205			

A one-way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of age on self-esteem and its dimensions, as measured by the Self-esteem Scale. Students were divided into three groups according to their age (Group 1: 20 or less; Group 2: 21 to 25; and Group 3: 26 to 35). There was no statistically difference in academic performance scores for the three age groups [F(2, 203)=2.444, p=.089], there was not emerged statistically difference in social evaluation scores for the three age groups [F(2, 203)=1.220, p=.297], there was not statistically difference in appearance scores for the three age groups[F(2, 203)=.939, p=.393], and eventually results of One Way ANOVA did not show any statistically difference in overall scores of self-esteem for the three age groups [F(2, 203)=2.340, p=.099].

Table-4: Showing Summary of One Way ANOVA on Self-esteem and Its Dimensions with Regard to Academic Branch

Variable	Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Academic Performance	Between Groups	4.192	2	2.096	.124	.883
	Within Groups	3425.653	203	16.875		
	Total	3429.845	205			
Social Evaluation	Between Groups	144.248	2	72.124	2.097	.126
	Within Groups	6982.626	203	34.397		
	Total	7126.874	205			
Appearance	Between Groups	2.279	2	1.140	.091	.913
	Within Groups	2537.609	203	12.501		
	Total	2539.888	205			
Overall Self-esteem	Between Groups	94.929	2	47.464	.424	.655
	Within Groups	22747.406	203	112.056		
	Total	22842.335	205			

A one-way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of age on self-esteem and its dimensions, as measured by the Self-esteem Scale. Students were divided into three groups according to their academic branch (Group 1: Art and Humanities; Group 2: Engineering; and Group 3: Science). There was no statistically significant difference in academic performance scores for the three groups [$F(2, 203)=.124, p=.883$], there was not emerged statistically significant difference in social evaluation scores for the three age groups [$F(2, 203)=2.097, p=.126$], there was not statistically significant difference in appearance scores for the three age groups [$F(2, 203)=.091, p=.913$], and eventually results of One Way ANOVA did not show any statistically significant difference in overall scores of self-esteem for the three age groups [$F(2, 203)=.424, p=.655$].

DISCUSSION

Results of this study demonstrated that male students showed higher mean scores on academic performance and overall scores of self-esteem in comparison to female students. But there was not emerged any significant difference between two groups on social evaluation and appearance. The results of this study are conformity with the research of Kearney (1999); McMullin and Cairney (2004); the results of these studies showed that women have exhibited lower levels of self-esteem than do men. Based on the findings of this study and similar researches, female student had lower academic performance and also their overall scores of self-esteem were lower than male students. The level of our self-esteem originate from factors that we select them according to actual abilities, self-reward principle and values. Self-esteem increases the academic performance and all people have both positive and negative aspects and sometimes have better performance. Males that have higher self-esteem emphasize more on their positive aspects while females emphasize on their negative aspects. Furthermore, males have higher preparation to accept their positive evaluations. Females might tend to accept their negative evaluations. Males with higher self-esteem increase their activity and evaluate their abilities in desirable levels for facing with difficulties and doing tasks that must be done. The basic need in our lives is having good sense toward ourselves. We need to esteem ourselves in some aspects such as physical, mental, emotional, and human being. This feeling is a motivation to be succeeded in our responsibilities that we have. Academic performance is one of the affairs that have a great linkage with self-esteem. According to the results of this study practitioners and researchers should pay more attention to these differences and promote the academic performance and enhance the self-esteem of female students because they are more vulnerable in academic performance.

The results of this study showed that there was not emerged statistically significant difference in academic performance, social evaluation, appearance and total scores of self-esteem for the three age groups. Although, results of studies on the impact of age on self-esteem the main findings of the studies usually provide a large in scope of age differences in self-esteem across the entire lifespan. Wylie (1979) studied a large review of the self-esteem literature and revealed that there are not existed systematic age differences in self-esteem. There are some studies that explored the self-esteem of students in some college and universities, but these studies did not conclude differences between the age ranges of college students. So, in accordance to finding of this study it is recommended to explore the age differences on self-esteem whether is there any significant differences exist in the self-esteem of the different age ranges of students.

The results of this study did not reveal statistically significant difference in academic performance, social evaluation, appearance and overall scores of the three groups; art and humanities, engineering and science students). It seems that academic branch has not a great impact on self-esteem vice versa gender had. The results of this study are in contrast with the research of O'Hare (1995); he found out that women enter engineering reporting high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. By lacking of research about academic branch, so it is strongly recommended to

select different samples from other faculties like medicine and compare their self-esteem with art and humanities, engineering and science students to see is there any significant difference between them or not.

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