

Self-Esteem Among Undergraduate Students of West Bengal: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

The present study aims to explore the self-esteem of undergraduate students with certain personal demographic and institutional variables. The researcher applied a descriptive survey method to this study. The sample of the study consisted of One Thirty-Seven undergraduate students of different general degree colleges from the district North 24 Parganas of West Bengal. The Self-Esteem scale developed by Heatherton, T.F. and Polivy, J. (1991) was administered to collect the data. The result of the study reveals that undergraduate students did not differ significantly in their Self-Esteem with respect to their gender, locality and type of college management.

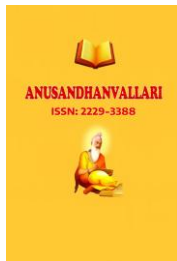
Keywords: Self-Esteem, Undergraduate Students, General Degree College

1. Introduction

The term "self-esteem" or "self-concept" originates from a Greek word that signifies "respect for oneself." It refers to the personal values, beliefs, and attitudes we hold about ourselves. In simple terms, self-esteem is about accepting ourselves as we are at any point in our lives. It reflects how positively or negatively we view ourselves—our overall sense of worth. This concept is commonly used in everyday language as well as in psychology.

Self-esteem has become a familiar term across all age groups, from infants to older adults. Questions like "Who am I?", "What is my value?", and "What do I want to become?" are typical human reflections. Essentially, self-esteem encompasses one's overall self-assessment. It involves a mental process of judging one's skills, values, knowledge, and potential. According to Coles (1970), identity is the personal effort to see oneself as a unique individual. Those with high self-esteem often show confidence, independence, accountability, personal strength, optimism, problem-solving abilities, and emotional control.

Self-esteem shapes our view of ourselves and plays a critical role, especially during adolescence, in forming a positive or negative self-image. Higher self-esteem tends to increase life satisfaction, while low self-esteem is often linked to stress and depression. A large study of 13,000 students by Diener and Diener (1995) found a strong link between self-esteem and happiness. During adolescence, research by Maeda (1990) shows that self-esteem is more closely tied to physical appearance than to academic success, social acceptance, or athletic ability. It greatly influences health and well-being and is considered a global evaluation of the self. Harter



(2006) highlights that both children and adults benefit from high self-esteem and self-confidence. Baumeister (1993) explains that self-esteem includes self-concept, self-respect, self-acceptance, and a sense of worth.

Self-esteem helps individuals gain the confidence, courage, and motivation to try new things and develop inner strength. Jackie Frost and McKelvie (2005) describe self-esteem as the overall regard one has for oneself. In India, there is an observable difference between private and government school students—private schools often offer superior infrastructure, technology, resources, and support systems, which may contribute to better outcomes.

Many factors influence a person's self-esteem. Negative labels like "dumb" or "slow," especially when repeated, can damage a child's self-worth. Harsh criticism, even if framed as a joke, and repeated failures can lead to low self-confidence. Among all these influences, the family is the most crucial. Mruk (1999) emphasizes that strong parental involvement typically boosts a child's self-esteem. A person with high self-esteem is more likely to be confident, motivated, and successful. On the other hand, low self-esteem often leads to negative thinking and belief in external criticism.

Coopersmith (1967) defines self-esteem as a collection of attitudes and beliefs one holds when facing the world. Gray (2001) sees it as a continuous sense of self-liking, while Branden (1969) describes it as the experience of feeling capable of handling life's challenges and deserving of happiness. He also views self-esteem as confidence in one's ability to achieve personal values.

During the higher studies, students have experienced new demands. Their self-satisfaction directly affects their perception and judgment of themselves. High levels of self-esteem are associated with retention rate, emotional well-being, and a better future (Lopes- Chaves, et al., 2013). Hall et al., (2011) have found that people who have higher levels of self-esteem, also have better job searching strategies, receive more positive self-assessments, can get more job offers, and their adjustment ability is also high for those who have low self-esteem.

2. Review Of Related Literature

- 1) **Lowery et al. (2005)** conducted research examining the relationship between body image, self-esteem, and health-related behaviours among first-year college students. The study included 267 female and 156 male students, with data collected across 23 classrooms. Tools used in the research included a demographic questionnaire, the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale, the Weight and Appearance Visual Analogue Scales, the Contour Drawing Rating Scale, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and a physical fitness/health behaviour assessment. Results showed that for women, self-esteem was consistently linked to dissatisfaction with body image. In general, female students reported more negative perceptions of their bodies compared to their male counterparts. This trend persisted even among those who exercised regularly—women still expressed poorer body image than men. Moreover, for both genders, engaging in healthy behaviours and maintaining physical fitness was positively associated with higher self-esteem and a better body image.

2) In a separate study, **Khalek et al. (2012)** explored self-esteem levels among college students from four Arab nations. The study had three goals: (a) to compare self-esteem among undergraduates from Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Oman, (b) to examine gender differences in self-esteem within these countries, and (c) to investigate the relationship between self-esteem, per-capita income, and unemployment rates. The study sampled a total of 2,643 students—576 from Egypt, 674 from Kuwait, 826 from Lebanon, and 567 from Oman. Findings revealed that men from Kuwait and Oman scored significantly higher in self-esteem than their peers from Egypt and Lebanon. Among women, Egyptian participants scored notably lower than Omani women, though the effect size was small. Regarding gender differences, Kuwaiti males scored significantly higher than

females in the same group, but again, the effect size was minimal. No significant gender-based differences were found in the other countries. These mixed findings suggest that gender differences in self-esteem may vary across cultures and may not be consistent worldwide. The study concluded that self-esteem tends to be higher in countries with higher per-capita income and lower unemployment rates.

3) **Parmar (2014)** conducted a study to examine how gender and economic status influence self-esteem among college students. The study involved a sample of 60 students—30 males and 30 females—equally divided by economic status (15 from high economic backgrounds and 15 from low economic backgrounds in each gender group). Participants were randomly selected from various arts colleges in Rajkot City, Gujarat. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation (SD), and t-tests. The results showed a significant difference in self-esteem between male and female students, with male students exhibiting healthier self-esteem levels than females. Additionally, students from higher economic backgrounds demonstrated better self-esteem compared to those from lower economic backgrounds.

4) **Kumar, Rakesh (2016)** carried out a study on the self-confidence levels of students from various schools in Tehsil Billawar and discovered that students attending private schools demonstrated higher self-confidence compared to those in government schools. In a similar vein, Priyanka (2017) investigated self-confidence among students from different localities and found that urban students showed greater self-confidence than their rural peers.

5) **Devi (2017)** revealed a significant and positive correlation between self-confidence and life skills among secondary school students. Her study also indicated that girls exhibited higher self-confidence than boys and that private school students had stronger self-confidence than those in government schools.

6) Additionally, **Kour, Tejinder (2019)** explored self-confidence among students from different academic streams and reported that students studying in the arts stream displayed greater self-confidence than their counterparts in the science stream.

3. Objectives

- 1) To study the self-esteem of undergraduate students
- 2) To find out the differences in self-esteem among undergraduate students in respect to gender
- 3) To find out the differences in self-esteem among undergraduate students in respect to their locality
- 4) To find out the differences in self-esteem among undergraduate students with respect to the type of college management

4. Hypotheses

HO1. There is no significant difference in self-esteem between male and female undergraduate students

HO2. There is no significant difference in self-esteem between urban and rural undergraduate students

HO3. There is no significant difference in self-esteem between government college undergraduate students and private college undergraduate students

5. Delimitation

Due to constraints of time and resources, the researcher was delimited to:

- Only 137 undergraduate students belong to urban and rural areas and studying in government and private general degree colleges of North 24 Parganas of West Bengal.

6. Methodology

The present study is a descriptive survey method. The data was collected from 137 undergraduate students of general degree colleges of North 24 Parganas of West Bengal. The researcher was applied simple random sampling method.

7. Tool Used For The Study

State Self-Esteem Scale by Heatherton, T.F. and Polivy, J. (1991) was used by the researcher in this present study.

8. Result And Discussion

The findings of the data analysis have been expressed in the tabular form as below:

H₀₁ : There is no significant mean difference between male and female undergraduate students in self-esteem

Table – 1

Mean Difference between male and female undergraduate students in self-esteem

Groups	N	Mean	SD	MD	df	SE _D	t-value	Significance
Male Students	60	70.08	10.40	0.59	135	2.08	0.28*	Not Significant at 0.05 level
Female Students	77	70.68	13.22					

*t-criterion value at 0.05 level is 1.98 for df 135.

Interpretation: There is no significant mean difference between male and female undergraduate students in self-esteem as the t-value of 0.28 is less than the t-criterion value of 1.98 at 0.05 level for df 135. Hence the null hypothesis H₀₁ is accepted. In this result, there is no large or consistent difference in Self-Esteem between genders. Here are the reasons behind equal Self-Esteem between male and female undergraduate students such as social progress, gender equality, and awareness of parents.

H₀₂ : There is no significant mean difference between rural and urban undergraduate students in self-esteem

Table – 2

Mean Difference between rural and urban undergraduate students in self-esteem

Groups	N	Mean	SD	MD	df	SE _D	t-value	Significance
Rural Students	67	70.51	13.01	0.18	135	2.06	0.09*	Not Significant at 0.05 level
Urban Students	70	70.33	11.10					

*t-criterion value at 0.05 level is 1.98 for df 135.

Interpretation: There is no significant mean difference between rural and urban undergraduate students in self-esteem as the t-value of 0.09 is less than the t-criterion value of 1.98 at 0.05 level for df 135. Hence the null hypothesis H₀₂ is accepted. The result reveals that the Self-Esteem of undergraduate students from urban and rural areas is almost equal or there are no such differences because in this present era, changing rural-urban



divide, supportive environment, development of coping strategies and resilience, personal traits and mindset, universal human need and values.

H₀₃: There is no significant mean difference between government college and private college undergraduate students in self-esteem

Table – 3
Mean Difference between government and
Private undergraduate students in self-esteem

Groups	N	Mean	SD	MD	df	SE _D	t-value	Significance
Government College Students	61	69.03	11.39	2.49	135	2.06	1.21	Not Significant at 0.05 level
Private College Students	76	71.53	12.48					

*t-criterion value at 0.05 level is 1.98 for df 135.

Interpretation: There is no significant mean difference between government and private undergraduate students in self-esteem as the t-value of 1.21 is less than the t-criterion value of 1.98 at 0.05 level for df 135. Hence the null hypothesis H₀₃ is accepted. Government and private general degree college students have no such differences in Self-Esteem and these are the reasons such as similar opportunities for success, supportive social circles, diverse student backgrounds, reduced stigma and increased awareness.

9. Major Findings

After the analysis of tabulated data, the researcher established the fact that there is no significant difference in Self-Esteem with respect to gender, locality and type of college management.

10. Conclusion

The aim was to study to compare the Self-Esteem of undergraduate students with respect to their gender, locality and type of college management. The results proved the hypotheses set, which stated that there is no significant difference in self-esteem between male and female undergraduate students, there is no significant difference in self-esteem between urban and rural undergraduate students, and there is no significant difference in self-esteem between government college undergraduate students and private college undergraduate students. This study also proves that in modern times, due to social progress males and females both are receiving equal opportunities for education and development and they both have high Self-Esteem. Students from rural areas also have similar Self-Esteem as urban students as in this globalisation period, we are experiencing more exposure in rural areas also. Lastly, government and private educational institutions are providing similar opportunities for career growth, and skill development and this process helps undergraduate students to grow their self-confidence and make them aware of mental well-being.

Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in this study and support to facilitate the research process.

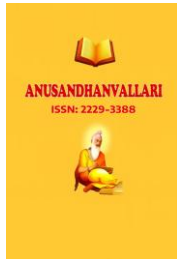
Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.



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