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Original Research Article

SELF ESTEEM AND CAREER DECISION-MAKING SELF-EFFICACY AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KERALA.

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ABSTRACT

Background: Self-esteem is a positive evaluation of one's value and importance whereas self-efficacy is the speculation and judgment about whether a person can complete a certain task. Positive self-esteem and assertion can bestow children the confidence to confront and successfully cope with their everyday issues of attention span and furnish effective learning. Even though both the concepts are different self-esteem plays an important role in predicting career decision-making self efficacy. This study was done to find out the self esteem and career decision making self efficacy among higher secondary school students.

Materials and Methods: Cross-sectional study was done among 654 students from various schools across 8 randomly selected districts in Kerala. Rosenberg self-esteem scale was used for assessing self esteem and career decision making self-efficacy scale (CDSE) short form was used to assess career decision making self-efficacy. Student t-test, ANOVA, and Kruskal Wallis were done to identify the factors associated with self-esteem and self efficacy.

Results: The mean self-esteem score is 28.03(4.46) and the mean career decision making self-efficacy score is 97.39(15.7) Science stream, being a firstborn child and a joint family increases career decision making efficacy. We found a positive correlation between self esteem and career decision making self efficacy..

Conclusion: Students with high self-esteem would have greater efficacy in decision making, which would encourage them to choose major career decisions and profession, based on their interest and ability. It would also relate to lower career uncertainty and increased work productivity from the younger population.

Keywords: Self esteem, career decision making self -efficacy, school students.

INTRODUCTION

Rosenberg (1965) and other social-learning theorists define self-esteem as a continued sense of worth or worthiness. It encompasses beliefs about oneself as well as emotional states, such as triumph, despair, pride, and shame.[1] High self-esteem means that individuals value and respect themselves for what they are. Positive self-esteem and assertion can bestow children the confidence to confront and successfully cope with their everyday issues of attention span and furnish effective learning. Hence it is often considered as having a double connotation, affective and cognitive.[2] On the contrary, low self-esteem has been associated with several psychological, physical, and social consequences that may influence successful adolescent development. Career decision-making self efficacy means how confident an individual is about their ability to perform a given task, necessary to make career decisions. Field observation has suggested that students lack the confidence to pursue their dream profession. Therefore, choosing decisions becomes a source of concern and a challenge for students.[3]

Self-esteem was positively related to, yet distinct from, career decision self-efficacy (CDSE).[4] Difficulties related to the lack of motivation, dysfunctional beliefs, and indecisiveness are less frequent, but their impact on the career decision-making process is probably more severe.[5]

Students who can utilize and include their personal interests and unique qualities in their careers have a greater chance of achieving career satisfaction. The ability to make decisions is also hindered when they don't feel self-confident in confronting their choices. Hence it is important to develop self-esteem and self-efficacy in school life itself for achieving career satisfaction. Thus the objective of this study was to assess self-esteem and career decision-making self efficacy among higher secondary .By determining the level of self-esteem and career making self- efficacy and the factors associated with it, we can introduce programs for cultivating positive self-esteem and career guidance programs which will pave path towards better enrolment in their interested courses and further satisfaction in their career choices.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research work is a Cross-sectional descriptive study. The sample size was calculated using the estimated prevalence of self esteem as 30% from the study "Data on self esteem among adolescents in India",[6] with level of precision as 5% at 95% Confidence interval and design effect of 2.Taking into consideration of non respondent rate also ,the final sample size fixed was 654.The study was conducted among the 12th-grade students of government and private schools across 8 randomly selected districts in Kerala. The sample comprised of students studying in 12th grade as 12th grade(classified as higher secondary in Kerala) is a critical point in student life where career decisions are to be made. Both government and private schools were selected randomly as clusters and the number of students from each school were selected by simple random sampling to meet the final sample size.

The data was collected by interview method using a pretested semi-structured questionnaire. The inclusion criteria include the students in 12th grade who responded to the questionnaire. The study variables include both exposure and outcome variables. Age, gender, birth order, type of family, body weight, educational status of mother and father, occupational status of mother and father, socioeconomic status and body image perception comprise the exposure variables. The outcome variables include self-esteem and career decision-making self-efficacy scores.

Self-esteem was assessed by Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale which consists of a 10-item scale in which all items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Here the score ranges from 10-40. Career decision-making making assessed by the Career Decision making Self-efficacy Scale –short form (CDSES-SF) which consists of 25 questions and the options range of each question varies from 1-5 scale using a 5-point Likert scale format ranging from no confidence at all to complete confidence. This scale was developed by Karen Taylor and Nancy Betz to apply Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. All the questions in the proforma were translated and administered in Malayalam language by subject experts.

All data collected was entered into Microsoft Excel and analysed using the statistical package for social sciences trial version (SPSS). All quantitative variables have been summarized as mean with standard deviation for normally distributed data and median and inter-quartile range for skewed data. Qualitative variables are expressed in frequencies and proportions. The statistical significance of association was tested using independent sample t - test for quantitative variables with two groups and ANOVA for more than two groups. Mann Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis test were used to find out the association for skewed variables. Pearson correlation test was done to find out the relation between two quantitative variables with normal distribution.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee No. 88/2024 dated 19.7.2024. Permission from the Principal, Informed consent from parents, and assent from participants were taken initially after explaining the purpose of the study. Confidentiality of the personal information was maintained throughout the study. The data obtained from the study was maintained confidentially and only the information is used for research purposes.

RESULTS

1. General characteristics of study participants

This study was conducted among 654 12th-grade students studying in 8 districts of Kerala. The mean age of the population under study is 17.20 (0.80) years with a minimum age of 14 years and the maximum age of 22 years. There were 35.2% male and 64.8% female students. Majority of them, i.e. 75.4% were from the southern part of Kerala. 88% were from science stream and only 19% were not satisfied with their body image. The data on other sociodemographic variables are shown in [Table 1].

2.4 %of the study participants were obese and 8% were overweight based on Body Mass Index(BMI) which is shown in [Figure 1].

2. Self-esteem

The descriptive statistics on total self-esteem score (Rosenberg self esteem scale) gave a mean score of 28.30 with a standard deviation of 4.46. The maximum score is 40 and minimum score is 12. The proportion of students with low self esteem (score range, 10-25) was 26.6%, those with average self esteem (26-19) was 35.2 % shown in [Figure 2]

3. Factors associated with self-esteem in the study

The correlation between self-esteem and BMI gives a negative Pearson correlation coefficient (-0.109) and the association is significant (p value 0.005). Hence high BMI was associated with low self esteem scores. The other factors which were found to be significant with self esteem (p value <0.05) were Body Image perception, Geography, Syllabus, Stream, Order of birth, Mother's Education and Obesity which is shown in [Table 2]. On regression, the factors which remained significant were body image perception, stream and order of birth.

4. Career decision making self- efficacy

The descriptive analysis of career decision making self-efficacy gave a mean score of 97.39 and a standard deviation of 15.7. The maximum score obtained is 125 and minimum score is 45.

5. Factors associated with career decision making self-efficacy

The factors significantly associated with career decision making self efficacy includes stream, type of family, order of birth and body image perception as shown in [Table 3]. The correlation between self-esteem and career decision making self-efficacy gives the Pearson correlation coefficient as 0.449 (positive), p value of 0.001 .Thus self esteem and career decision making self efficacy is positively correlated.

Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics of study participants(n=654)

Sl.no.	Sociodemographic variables		Number	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	230	35.20
		Female	424	64.80
2	Schools	Private	580	88.70
		Government	74	11.30
3	Syllabus	State	210	32.10
		CBSE	383	58.60
		ISE	61	9.30
4	Stream	Science	576	88.10
		Commerce	43	6.60
		Humanities	35	5.40
5	Body image perception	Satisfied	529	80.90
		Not satisfied	125	19.10
6	Birth	First born	349	53.40
		Second born	235	35.90
		Third born	51	7.80
		Fourth born	19	2.90
7	Family	Joint	218	33.30
		Nuclear	436	66.70
8	Father's education	Primary	28	4.30
		High school	104	15.90
		Intermediate/diploma	170	26.30
		Graduate	239	36.50
		Post graduate	113	17.00
10	Mother's education	Primary	10	1.50
		High school	92	14.10
		Intermediate/diploma	165	25.20
		Graduate	257	39.30
		Post graduate	130	19.90
11	Residence	Rural	364	55.70
		Urban	290	44.30

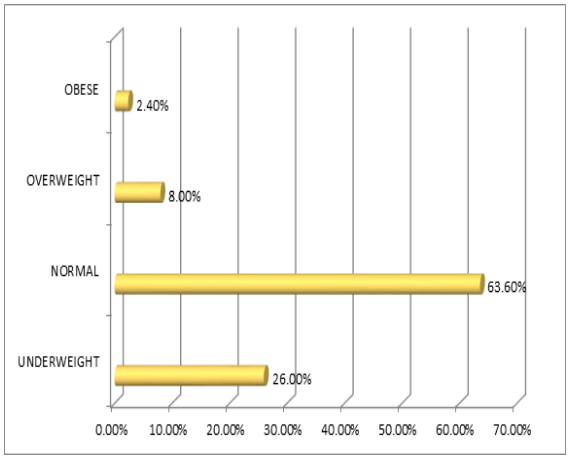

Figure 1: Prevalence of obesity among study participants

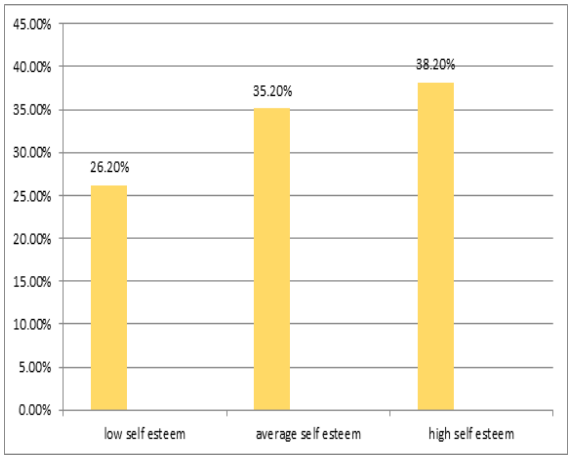

Figure 2: Proportion of students with various levels of self esteem

Table 2: showing the factors associated with self esteem

Sl. No.	Factors		Mean self-esteem score	Standard deviation	p value	Statistical test
1	Body Image	Satisfied	29.01	4.19	0.001	Student t test
		Not Satisfied	25.30	4.35		
2	Geography	North Kerala	28.64	4.56	0.001	Student t test
		South Kerala	27.26	4.00		
3	Syllabus	CBSE	28.46	4.63	0.009	ANOVA
		State	27.66	3.99		
		ISE	29.52	4.69		
4	Stream	Science	28.44	4.53	0.016	ANOVA
		Commerce	28.13	3.78		
		Humanities	26.22	3.66		
5	Order of birth	First born	28.60	4.32	0.015	ANOVA
		Second born	28.33	4.52		
		Third born	26.62	4.74		
		Fourth born	27.00	4.79		
6	Mother's Education	Primary	28.10	5.02	0.008	ANOVA
		High school	27.46	3.7576		
		Pre degree	28.20	4.28		
		Graduate	29.04	4.52		
		Post Graduate	27.59	4.82		
7	Obesity	Underweight	28.39	4.00	0.018	ANOVA
		Normal	28.50	4.45		
		Overweight	27.26	5.73		
		Obese	25.50	3.77		

Table 3: showing factors associated with Career decision making self efficacy

Sl. No.	Factors		Mean score	Standard deviation	p value	Statistical test
1	Stream	Science	97.92	15.70	0.04	Kruskal Wallis
		Commerce	93.37	16.03		
		Humanities	93.60	15.87		
2	Order of birth	First born	98.78	15.14	0.02	Kruskal Wallis
		Second born	96.84	16.26		
		Third born	92.96	16.89		
		Fourth born	90.63	14.72		
3	Body Image	Satisfied	98.45	15.35	0.001	Mann Whitney U
		Not Satisfied	92.89	16.78		
4	Family	Nuclear	96.46	16.39	0.045	Mann Whitney U
		Joint	99.26	14.30		

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted among 654 students studying in 12th standard of various districts across Kerala. There were 35.2% males and 64.8% female students.

The mean self-esteem score in this study was 28.30 (SD 4.46). Similar findings were found in a study 'Self-esteem levels vs Global scores' where the global mean score on Rosenberg self-esteem scale was 32.30.[7] According to Rahel Tajeddini's 'A Comparative Study concerning self-esteem and demographic variables in Indian and foreign students' the mean score of Indian students is 18.88,[8] which is less compared to our study. This difference could arise due to better literacy and socio-economic development in Kerala compared to other states. But the global score suggest that we need to address the issue and focus on life skill development programmes in school curriculum.

The present study also found that student's Career Decision Self Efficacy (CDSE) mean score was 97.39 (SD 1.57). This score is comparable to the study conducted in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, where the CDSE mean score is 90.71.[9] Another study among secondary school students of south-eastern Australia and the eastern region of South Africa found a CDSE mean score of 87.36 in students of Australia and 92.46 in students of South Africa, which is less compared to our findings.[10] These findings may be due to the different socio cultural as well as educational backgrounds in different countries.

Even present study results reveal that there is a significant relationship (directly related) between self-esteem and career decision making self-efficacy. Another study among college students reveals that there is a negative correlation between career decision-making difficulties and self-esteem, this means that if the self-esteem is higher then the difficulties in making career decisions will be less.[11] Current study findings oppose the findings of a study conducted by Ogutu, Odera and Maragia to examine the influence of self-efficacy in career decision making among secondary school students in Busia County, Kenya where the result implied that there is an inverse proportional relationship between self-efficacy and career decision making.[12] The difference could arise due to the factor that the study was conducted among students in post-secondary institutions in developed nations, with different educational backgrounds and exposure. Hence

fostering self esteem among students will help to make them proficient in career decision making and better psychological outcomes.

Statistical analysis has found that body image perception, geography, syllabus, stream, order of birth, mother's education, and BMI have significant relations with self-esteem. Concerning body image, those individuals who are satisfied with their body image have been found to have more self-esteem ($p<0.001$). This is also reflected in studies in Malaysia on second-year undergraduate students and also by Furnham,2002, in the USA.[13] A contrary finding was made by Diana, Priya Dharshini in Trichy who reported that there was no significant difference in self-esteem of male and female students based on their body image.[14]

The relationship of BMI with self-esteem showed results that overweight/obese students have less self-esteem than underweight or normal-weight students ($p=0.018$). Males with low body image perceive themselves as 'too heavy' as quoted by Hargreaves and Tiggemann, 2004.[15] Similar results were obtained by Diann M Ackard in USA in a study done among adolescents, ($p=0.002$).[16]

It was seen that students learning under ICSE had more self-esteem than students studying under CBSE or state syllabus, ($p=0.009$). But D.Ponmozhi and S Seetha Lekshmi ($p=0.33$), 2017, found no difference in self-esteem among students based on different school types.[17]

Another factor that plays a significant role in determining self-esteem is the stream of choice. Science and Commerce students were found to have more self-esteem than Humanities students($p=0.016$). Students in science and commerce are considered to be more academically successful as compared to their peers in humanities, thus improving their self-esteem (Husseini et.al 2007) ($p=0.003$), Aryana ($p=1$),2010.[18] Although Hossein (2010), found only a weak positive correlation between academic success and self-esteem.[19]

Our study also investigated how order of birth in one's family affects self-esteem. First born children seem to have higher self-esteem than later born children, ($p=0.015$). The greater attention and encouragement from parents should contribute to first born typically greater power and competence compared with younger siblings. However previous research provides only modest support for these expectations (Blake 1989).[20] Youngest born children have low- self-esteem compared to first and second-born children probably due to the more conditioned environment they grow up in, resulting in decreased self-efficacy and self-esteem.

It was seen that as the mother's education status improved, there was an increase in self-esteem among the students($p=0.008$). These findings are consistent with previous literature Ertugal 2013.[21] This is possible because parents with higher education levels can relate academically to their children and help them cope with stress. Hence sensitizing parents who are the main stakeholders in the education system can bring about positive changes in self esteem of their children.

According to this study among the 12th-grade students from different parts of the state, the students of the science stream are found to have a higher mean CDSE score (97.92) in comparison to the commerce (93.37) and humanities (93.60) stream. A similar observation can be seen in "Factors influencing career decision making in urban adolescents"- A comparative study by Monteiro, Shruthi, and Roseline, Karnataka where a career decision-making profile was studied with science students scoring more.[22] Further, this study brings to notice that the first-born child has more Career Decision making Self Efficacy score than the latter-born. The firstborn has shown a mean of 98.78, the mean regresses in the order of birth. A similar observation can be seen in the reports of Ronald M. Herndon.[23]

The present study also attempted to examine the influence of body image satisfaction and how it relates to career decision making self-efficacy and assertiveness. Those who are satisfied with their body image show a mean of 98.45 whereas not satisfied group shows a mean of 92.89. Similar findings were obtained in a study conducted in Korea where employment stress showed a negative correlation with appearance satisfaction.[24]

CONCLUSION

The findings from the study imply that self esteem is directly related to career decision making self efficacy. Sufficient changes in the school curriculum imparting activities to enhance self esteem will help the students to become confident about their career choices. Factors favouring self esteem and career decision making self efficacy from this study can be taken into consideration while implementing such changes. These strategies will in turn assist students, educators, counsellors and other stakeholders in shaping an adolescent-friendly environment.

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