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## Factors Influencing Social Self-esteem of Teenagers in Rural Communities

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### Abstract

Self-esteem, a fundamental human need, influences individuals' thoughts, emotions, and actions. This study explores the development of self-esteem in teenagers and the various factors that shape social self-esteem. They include gender and family conditions. Self-esteem impacts life satisfaction, mental health, and social well-being, with low self-esteem linked to behaviors like substance abuse and mental health issues. The literature review highlights the significance of self-esteem in adolescence, emphasizing its correlation with academic achievements, emotional well-being, and social self-esteem. Using a sample of 801 teenagers aged 13-15, the study employs James Battle's Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory (1981) to assess self-esteem levels and examine demographic influences. Descriptive statistics showed that gender identity, having single parent and the birth order in the family had influenced the social worth of the teenagers. The study's findings will be relevant for designing interventions to improve the mental health and self-esteem of teenagers, particularly in rural communities.

**Keywords:** Self-esteem, social self-esteem, teenager

### Introduction

Self-esteem can be understood as once judgement on self-importance, self-competence and self-respect. It is well recognised as a fundamental human need and vital for survival. Self-esteem determines the thoughts, feelings and actions of individuals. It contains two elements of self-knowledge and awareness. At the various stages of individuals development self-worth of an individual gets shaped. When a child grows to begin the communication with parents, peers and people around him/her it becomes aware of its own traits.

Self-esteem is strongly connected with a wide range of other factors, including life satisfaction (Diener & Diener, 1995) [5]. In addition to being a psychosocial competency, self-esteem is a vital life skill that indicates one's ability to handle stress, typical setbacks, and the demands and difficulties of day-to-day living. Covarrubias R, Fryber S A (2015) [4] observed that the awareness of self is more active in teenage and adolescence. Development of self-esteem starts from birth and changes according to the experiences the child will encounter. Self-esteem has significant impact on mental and social health of teenagers. McClure A C *et al* (2010) [8], Munris P *et al* (2006) [9] have found the low self-esteem in the context of being a girl and poor socio-economic conditions of family. Low self-esteem is also found to be correlated with behaviour and mental health problems among adolescents. Such individuals often tend to develop health compromising behaviours like substance abuse, abnormal eating and active sexual involvements.

It is understood that better self-esteem leads to better sense of

well being or positive perception of one self. Research has shown clear connection between high self-esteem and positive outcome. If self-esteem continues to improve as the teenager grows, it results in occupational success, better marital life and active social involvement. Teenagers who have identity of success and happiness showcase positive sense of self-worth or self-esteem. This idea of teenagers at the stage of success or failure being studied in order to understand at risk teenagers if any. Catering to the psycho social and mental health needs of children and teenagers is stressed by social scientists and mental health professionals. Interventions will be effective if they are based on empirical evidences. This study will be greatly relevant in knowing the mental health conditions of rural teenagers in our local areas. Professional social workers are the part of scientific community to assess the needs and plan relevant interventions in order to address the issue.

A key component of total self-worth is social self-esteem, which is a reflection of how people view their value in social situations and relationships. It includes sentiments of competence, acceptance, and self-assurance in interpersonal interactions, which affect how people behave in social situations and engage with others. Social self-esteem is particularly related to one's role and experiences in social situations, such as friendships, group interactions, and public locations, in contrast to general self-esteem, which is concerned with one's whole sense of self.

Social self-esteem has a significant impact on personality, communication abilities, and emotional health from childhood into maturity. It influences how people establish and preserve

relationships, how they respond to criticism or comments, and how open they are to trying out new social situations. While low social self-esteem can result in social anxiety, retreat, and feelings of inadequacy, high social self-esteem makes a person more likely to be self-assured, assertive, and at ease in social situations.

Numerous elements, such as peer interactions, personality traits, family dynamics, and cultural contexts, have an impact on the development of social self-esteem. The theoretical underpinnings of social self-esteem will be covered in this chapter, along with its development and effects on psychological health and social relationships. In an increasingly social environment, cultivating positive relationships and improving one's quality of life require an understanding of the complexity of social self-esteem.

### Review of Literature

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-esteem takes prominent place as it explains individuals desire to achieve, to be competent, appreciation and so on. UNICEF (2008) upholds self-esteem as one of the major life skills. A healthy self-esteem undoubtedly boosts one's motivation and enhances the quality of life. On the other hand, low self-esteem leads to a lack of self-confidence. It is imperative to provide teenagers with the skills necessary to handle life's difficult circumstances. In the context of teenagers self-esteem, their academic achievements play a prominent role. In addition to this Rosenberg (1965) [11] recognized parenting, type of education, structure and dynamics of families impact the self-esteem of children. Self-esteem being the emotional measurement of the self, how one admires and values oneself becomes significant. Emotional development of an individual is highly shaped by the environment in which one lives.

When Neill *et al* (2003) [10] studied the self-esteem of Australian and South East Asian youth, it was noticed that South East Asian youth had lower self-esteem. In the opinion of Vogel Rick (2023) [15] students of urban school had high self-esteem than the students of rural schools and he opines that social environment influences their self-worth and academic results. Adam (2003) [1] there is a change in rural communities. Though he said it in the context of US communities, the statement has relevance on Indian rural communities. Rapid changed in the socio economic structures exposes children to changed environment and education. Poor self-esteem was found in a sizable portion of rural Karnataka youth by Sharath *et al.* (2020) [12], underscoring the importance of recognizing poor self-esteem early on and working toward it when necessary.

Academic, social, and emotional well-being can be impacted by self-esteem during adolescence, a time of significant physical and mental transformation. As a result, periodically evaluating the condition becomes pertinent.

### Methodology

Social scientists and mental health experts emphasize the importance of attending to children and teens' psychosocial and mental health needs. If interventions are grounded in empirical data, they will be successful. In this regard, the aim of the current study is to assess the self-esteem of teenagers in the selected universe and analyse the factors influencing the level of parent related self-esteem. The population of the study consisted of teenagers between the age of 13-15 years. A complete enumeration method has been applied in the study to ensure inclusivity, accuracy and to allow precise analysis and conclusions. Hence a total of 801 participants were

included in the study. To assess the self-esteem of the participants Culture Free Self-esteem Inventory of James Battle 1981 was used and researcher developed an interview schedule to obtain the data on demographic characteristics of the respondents which will be quantitatively analysed to know the influence of few variables on self-esteem. Descriptive statistics has been used to analyse and interpret the data.

### Results and Discussion

**Table 1:** Demographic details of the participants

	Age in years	Frequency	Percentage
Age of the Respondents	13 years	300	37.45%
	14 years	281	35.08%
	15 years	220	27.47%
	Total	801	100
Gender of the Respondents	Male	398	49.68%
	Female	403	50.32%
	Total	801	100
Birth Order	First born	196	24.46%
	Second born	240	29.97%
	Last child	265	33.08%
	Single Child	100	12.49%
	Total	801	100
Type of Family	Nuclear family	610	76.15%
	Joint family	81	10.11%
	Single parent family	103	12.85%
	Both parents not living	7	0.87%
	Total	801	100
Academic Performance	A Grade	438	54.68%
	B Grade	282	35.20%
	C Grade	81	10.12%
	Total	801	100

Table 1 provides the data on the demographic characteristics of the participants included in the study. All of the respondents, as seen in the above table, are in the 13-15 age range. It is evident that 13 is the average age of 37.45% of them. 14-year-olds make up 35.08%. The number of girls (403) was slightly higher than the boys (398). According to birth order, 24.46% of the siblings were the firstborn, 29.96% were the second, and 33.08% were the last. The percentage of single children was 12.49%. A vast majority comprising 76.15% were found to be living in nuclear family. A considerable percentage of 10% are still living in joint families and another 12% are living with single parent either father or mother. Academic performance was assessed based on the marks obtained by the participants in the last final exam or end of the year exam and it was found that 54% scored good grades in exam indicating good performance. Significant number of 282 had obtained B grade

### Level of Self-esteem

According to James Battle's 1981 Culture Free Self-esteem Inventory, self-esteem is examined from four perspectives. General self-esteem, which represents an individual's whole value. It gauges an individual's positive and negative self-perception. Social self-esteem recognizes a person's social relationships and social group affiliations. It is the evaluation of one's value in connection to interpersonal relationships, one's capacity for forming relationships with others, and one's

comprehension of how one values one's own social interactions. Academic self-esteem comprises a child's evaluation of their own participation in both academic and extracurricular school activities, as well as their impression of their teachers and other classmates. Adolescents' relationship

with their parents is evaluated in the parent-related self-esteem domain since parenting shapes adolescents' perceptions of themselves. The results are presented in Table 2

**Table 2:** Level of self-esteem among the participants

Domains	Very Low	Low	Intermediate	High	Very High
General Self-esteem	8.4%	10.5%	24.9%	47.4%	8.5%
Social Self-esteem	22.9%	26.8%	37.4%	11.3%	1.6%
Academic Self-esteem	3.1%	10.8%	18.8%	40%	27.3%
Parent Related Self-esteem	.62%	10.8%	35%	37.45%	16.10%

When all aspects of self-esteem are taken into account, the majority of individuals have low social self-esteem. The lack of social chances in rural areas due to resource scarcity, remote location, and insufficient access to enhanced support networks may impede the development of "better social self-

esteem." In comparison to other dimensions, academic self-esteem is somewhat higher (40% high and 27.3% very high), suggesting that most adolescents believe they are achieving well academically.

**Table 3:** Type of family and level of Parent related Self-esteem

Type of Family	Very high		High		Intermediate		Low		Very Low		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Nuclear	81	14.54	257	46.14	170	30.57	49	8.7%	0	0	557
Joint	38	27.33	18	12.94	68	48.92	15	10.79	0	0	139
Single Parent	10	10.63	23	24.46	41	43.61	18	19.14	2	2.1	94
Parentless	-	-	2	18.18	1	9.0	4	36.36	4	36.36	11
Total	129	16.10	300	37.45%	280	35%	87	10.86%	5	.62%	801

Nuclear family structure has been contributing to high self-esteem among the participants as 46.54% and 14.54% of them are in the level of high and very high respectively. There is a considerable percentage of participants from joint families who have intermediate level of self-esteem and a significant

portion of 27.33% having high self-esteem. On the other side, 21.24% of participants reported being impacted by being a single parent. Participants who are parentless had extremely poor levels of self-esteem, with 36.36% of them being in this category.

**Table 4:** Birth Order vs Social Self-esteem

Birth order of the Participants	Very High	High	Intermediate	Low	Very Low	Total
First Child	-	51(26.2%)	83(42.3%)	40(20.4%)	22(11.22%)	196
Second Child	5 (2%)	21(8.7%)	159(66.2%)	41(17%)	14(5.9%)	240
Last Child	-	11(4.1%)	40(15.1%)	94(35.5%)	120(45.28%)	265
Single Child	8 (8%)	7(7%)	18(18%)	39(39%)	28(28%)	100
Total	13	90	300	214	184	801

The dynamics of sibling relationships and the position of a child within the family play a significant role in shaping their personality and social identity. Results shown in the table indicate that being the last child in the family has influenced the social self-esteem as 45.28% had very low scores and 35.5% reported having low social self-esteem. Youngest children are often compared with their elder siblings. When positive comparisons enhance once self-esteem but negative comparisons can lower it. Findings of the current study are contradictory to the various studies which have shown that the being the last child has influenced the social abilities in the positive manner. Sulloway's (1996) [13] study on sibling rivalry and birth order revealed that younger siblings frequently get more attention from parents and other siblings than do older siblings. Because they are used to social interactions, this can result in a sense of security and increased social confidence in external settings. Buunk (1997) [3] also asserts that younger siblings are more inclined to look for close peer relationships outside of the family. Through

friendships and peer approval, these social circles can strengthen social self-esteem and serve as protective barriers against negative self-esteem issues that result from sibling comparison. Therefore, more research is required to understand the mechanisms underlying the study population's poor social self-esteem. Furthermore, children raised alone might not have as many opportunities to socialize with peers as other children do, which could have an impact on how well they handle challenging social situations as adults. Lower social self-esteem may result from this in some situations. While only children are generally well-adjusted, a meta-analysis by Falbo (2012) [7] indicated that they can occasionally struggle with social adaption, especially in situations that are competitive or group-oriented where peer dynamics are more intense.

**Gender Vs Social Self-esteem**

Various social, cultural, and psychological factors influence how males and females see their social competence and self-

worth, and gender plays a crucial role in developing social self-esteem. Divergent experiences in the development of social self-esteem between genders are frequently caused by

differences in expectations, socialization, and cultural conventions.

**Table 5:** Gender Vs Social Self-esteem

Gender	Very low	Low	Intermediate	High	Very High	Total
Male	60(15.1%)	73(18.3%)	190(47.73%)	75(18.9%)	-	398
Female	124(30.8%)	141(35%)	110(27.29%)	15(3.8%)	13(3.2%)	403
Total	184	214	300	90	13	801

Results have shown high social self-esteem among boys. Low social self-esteem among girls can be attributed to various factors in the rural communities. Traditional gender roles, societal pressure as per the body image, norms in the name of safety and security will restrict the social competence of the girl children. Girls and women are more likely to experience social anxiety and self-consciousness in social settings, which can result in a decrease in social self-esteem (Eagly's 1987) [6]. Adolescence is a time when gender disparities in social self-esteem frequently become most noticeable, with females usually suffering a higher decline in self-esteem as a result of body image problems, peer dynamics, and emotional instability.

### Recommendations and Conclusion

Social self-esteem plays a critical role in their emotional well-being, relationships, and overall development. Improving rural teens' social self-esteem necessitates addressing the particular difficulties brought on by their lack of social opportunities, remote location, and cultural expectations. School social workers should concentrate on helping teenagers, particularly those from single-parent households and girls, to form social networks. Working with families to improve family relations and raise the self-esteem of their adolescent children is also highly pertinent. Implementing self-esteem building activities that help teens recognize their strengths, talents, and unique contributions to their community can lead to greater self-worth. Teens from rural areas frequently have strong ties to their communities, so being involved in volunteer work or community-based initiatives can make them feel important and respected. Their social self-esteem may benefit from this sense of belonging and leadership skills that they showcase. Enhancing social self-esteem among rural teenagers requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the above strategies.

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