Self-satisfaction and Self-esteem among urban youths: Role of material and non-material culture in India

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Abstract

Study Objective: To understand how material and non material culture influence the self satisfaction and how they define self esteem.

Research Design: A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among the young adults residing in Raipur, Uttar Pradesh, India. A total of 203 respondents were selected conveniently out of which 110 were male respondents and 93 were female respondents.

Methods: A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared consisting of 25 items using Rosenberg self esteem scale and few qualitative questions to assess the self esteem on various aspects. Then the data was thematically analysed for qualitative questions and coded, tabulated and analysed statistically for quantitative questions in Statistical package for social science (SPSS) software using frequency, percentage, and chi square test.

Result: self esteem and self satisfaction has a statistical significant association. Also result indicated that with the increase in material culture the self satisfaction and self esteem decreases.

Conclusion: Education is an essential phenomenon for an overall development of an individual. Education should include ethical and spiritual training that will help to meet the moral challenge of the society.

Keywords: Self esteem, Rosenberg scale, self satisfaction

Introduction

Self esteem is a broader representative of self that include cognitive and behavioural aspect. It is directly or indirectly related to mental health along with most of the psychological domain such as personality, behaviour, cognition, and clinical manifestations like depression, anxiety, etc. Self esteem is a term which is widely used both in psychology and in day to day life. The basic foundation for self esteem development is the positive or negative life experiences. It creates attitudes toward self which can be favourable and develop optimistic feelings or unfavourable and create pessimistic feelings of self-worth. In early years, parents put a significant influence on self-esteem of an individual [1] which is also likely to be affected by others opinion and appraisals. Thus self esteem plays an important role in shaping one’s behaviour [2].

Self esteem is more often used in three terms: global self esteem, self evaluation and feeling of self worth. Sometimes this terminology is expressed as what an individual feel about himself i.e. to refer...
the personality variable which is known as global self esteem. The term self evaluation is used to evaluate the individual’s ability like if someone considered to be good in sports, than he has high athletic self esteem. The feeling of self worth is taken under consideration when self esteem is used to assess the emotions and can vary due to one’s past experiences in life. When an individual achieves his goals it leads to increase in his self esteem which builds positivity and non achievements may result to plunge in the self esteem level [3]. Self can make judgement, pass values, and independent to take decisions, thus self esteem comes into play. Therefore, self esteem is the judgement of everything an individual can access [4]. Self esteem is a crucial subject for research study as it extends across the entire spectrum of human existence [5].

Many researchers have given different definitions for self esteem. In the year 1950’s Branden fairly claims to bring this term in the consideration of the general population and defined it as “the estimate one individual passes on him/herself by way of a value judgement”[4]. In 1993, Harter gave another definition as the global regard that one has for himself [6]. Self esteem is also defined as a complex varied mental state which pertains how an individual analyse himself[4]. Baumeister in 1998 defined this terminology as the part of self concept which evaluates the worthiness of an individual [7]. Although several definitions have been given to define self esteem, none of the definition in the literature seems to match [4].

Self-esteem is considered to be an important indicator for life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is referred as a cognitive and judgmental process, which is the global evaluation of one’s life on various aspects such as job, marriage, friends etc instead summing up across specific domains [8]. Based on previous literature, life satisfaction is divided into three indicators; job satisfaction, family satisfaction and health satisfaction. The basis behind the division is; work and family which are the crucial components that create a significant impact on life satisfaction of an individual. The clinical literature suggests that if an individual successfully manages his multiple roles, it may enrich his life. On the contrary, when an individual has difficulty in striking this balance, there may potentially be numerous detrimental outcomes [9].

Previous researcher suggests that self-esteem is directly associated to satisfaction with life and with individual’s positive attitudes. The high level of self-esteem indicates that the person has optimistic attitude whereas the high level of life satisfaction means that the person is positively evaluating his life. Thus life satisfaction and self-esteem both are related to each other with positive feeling towards oneself[10]. At present social researchers has informed that the world has entered into a new era known as “late modernity” – which has led to tremendous global processes [11] that has influenced the youth in many ways starting from their professional choices to family and societal interaction, moving towards their hobbies to their socialization process. Immaterial culture has put a great impact on the perception of the youths. Traditional social culture and value in terms of education and employment are in jeopardy. It has eroded the conventional charisma of the parental authority and supervision which defines the youth life style and aspiration even includes their future planning. Since youth has the ability to acquire upcoming challenges and progress new moral values in a fast changing society [12], they move towards more scintillating culture rather than sticking back to traditional value system which has impacted their life.

In engraved cultural value, the consumption choices are important implications on self satisfaction of an individual. The youth influenced by symbolic material culture to reduce the social distance and class differences of social hierarchies. The modern day youth has access to social media which intern is having an adverse effect on the choices. The society today is highly influenced by material culture which is also reflected in previous literature as ethical values having a transcendental quality to it, guiding actions, attitudes, judgements and comparisons across specific objects and situations [13]. Several studies have focused on material culture relating to personality and behaviour traits of youth guided in a multifarious situations and experiences. It was found that individual who are materialists
can be characterized as covetous, concerned with position, competitive and self centred[14]. Material culture is assessed with the behaviour traits like desire, greed and possessiveness which have a positive association with envy[15]. Another empirical study reported that there are no significant differences regarding attitudes toward materialism with age. However, there is an inverse relationship between self-confidence and susceptibility to influence. Since materialistic attitudes have been associated with low self-esteem, individual having more materialistic attitudes would also be more susceptible to influence[14]. Regardless of the morals, ethical values and culture, the self-esteem is based on the fulfilment of the dominant non materialistic culture which has very less or no influence on the self regard of an individual but it also depends on the fulfilment of the value priorities in the cultural environments[16].

We hypothesized that non-material culture influence self satisfaction and self esteem. Since only handful of studies has been conducted on this issue of youth dependence on material and non-material culture and self satisfaction, therefore the paper tries to throw light on how people define self esteem and its relationship with self satisfaction and self-esteem.

Methodology

The design of the study was descriptive cross sectional in nature. A sample of 203 college students residing in Raipur, Uttar Pradesh, were selected out of which 110 were male and 93 were female respondents based on the inclusion and the exclusion criteria. Youth residing in the study area and studying in the colleges were considered for inclusion. Youths not willing to participate were excluded from the study.

Research Tool and Field work

A semi-structured and pretested questionnaire was prepared to collect the data. The questionnaire was prepared in English language. A 10 item survey that include Rosenberg self esteem scale (RSES) and demographic information like gender, education, mother education, family income (per month), as well as qualitative questions were added in the questionnaire and was pretested for its reliability and validity. Ethical approval is taken from the ethical committee of Amity University to conduct the research. A written consent was taken and then the questionnaire was administered to the participants. The 10 item likert scale was answered on a four point scale- from strongly agree to strongly disagree and was used to evaluate the self esteem of the respondents. The total of the score may vary from the lowest of a 0 to the maximum of 30. On the basis of the total score self esteem was divided into three categories as (a) Low- if total score is less than 15, (b) medium/moderate/average self esteem - if total score is between 15-25 and (c) high self esteem- if total score is greater than 25. Each respondent was contacted and suitable time was taken on first visit for interview.

Statistical Analysis

The data was coded to ensure the confidentiality. The open ended questions were thematically analysed. Collected data was tabulated and graphs were made in Microsoft excel sheet and analysed using the software ‘Statistical package for social science’ (SPSS). The entered data was verified and checked for data errors during coding and data entry. The group characteristics were presented in frequency and proportions. Chi-square test was used to compare the self esteem of males and females students. P value less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results

A qualitative question was asked from the respondents about the perception regarding self esteem and how they define self esteem. The responses were analysed thematically and categorised under 6
indicators as self concept, self respect, self worth, self confidence, emotions and attitude. Among total number of respondents 11.33% didn’t responded the question.

1) **Self respect** - “Self esteem is defined as the respect towards one being in the society and how much an individual respect himself or herself” (a male respondent, age 21 years). Out of all the respondents 8.86% defined self esteem in terms of self respect.

2) **Self confidence** - “Self esteem is basically a person’s self confidence; it is a quality that one believe in himself in whatever work he is doing” (a male respondent, age 24 years). Among total participants 16.74% responded in terms of self confidence.

3) **Self worth** - “self esteem is defined as a person evaluation of his or her own worth i.e. where does a person stand in his/her eyes” (a female respondent, age 24 years). Amongst total respondents 10.34% of respondent defined self esteem on the aspect of self worth.

4) **Self concept** - “self esteem is the value or importance an individual gives to himself/herself” (a male respondent, age 23 years). 35.46% participants defined self esteem on self concept basis.

5) **Emotions** - “Self esteem is defined as how a person manages his emotions, pride or shame and handle these aspects wisely in different situations without a feeling of discomfort” (a female respondent, age 23 years). 8.86% of the respondents defined self esteem on emotional aspect.

6) **Attitude** - “Self esteem is knowledge of own self, our attitude, strength, weakness and everything” (a male respondent, age 21 years). Among total participants 8.37% has defined self esteem in terms of attitude.

**Self esteem and self satisfaction**
It was hypothesized that individuals who were more satisfied with life have more self-esteeem than those who were less satisfied with life. It was reported that there is a statistically significance between self esteem and self satisfaction p<0.05. On analysis it was seen that the respondents who are satisfied (strongly agree and agree) with their life had more of moderate and high self esteem level when compared to the respondents who were dissatisfied (strongly disagree and disagree) with their life.

**Association of material and non material culture on self esteem and self satisfaction**
We assume that with media exposure, youth are more attracted towards material culture which may affect their self satisfaction and esteem. However the literature suggests that non material culture has positive association with self satisfaction and self esteem. A set of questions were asked from the respondents which were characterized as materialism and non materialism. The question asked was “does the material culture increase their self satisfaction”. The dominant views that reported from the interview regarding the attributes for the material culture were having partner, using vehicle, need for modern gadgets and throwing parties whereas non materialism was defined as ethics, cultural values, moral, tradition and security by the respondents. Those said ‘yes’ for the question for the following attributes has been categorized under material culture and those answered ‘no’ and said that morals, values and culture increases the self satisfaction was categorized under non material culture. Table 1 shows that the respondent who said that non material culture is important has high self satisfaction and self esteem when compared to the respondents who answered that material culture is a necessity in present day world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Influence of material and non material culture on self satisfaction and self esteem</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1) Having partner</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Self satisfaction</strong></td>
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<td>Agree</td>
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<td>Disagree</td>
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<td><strong>Self esteem</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2) Using vehicle</strong></td>
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<td>Self satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>Self esteem</td>
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<td><strong>3) Using gadget</strong></td>
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<td>Self satisfaction</td>
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<td>Agree</td>
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<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>Self esteem</td>
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<td><strong>4) Throwing parties</strong></td>
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<td>Self satisfaction</td>
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<td>Agree</td>
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<td>Disagree</td>
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**Discussion**

The finding of the results reported that the definition of self esteem focus on six parameters: self respect, self confidence, self worth, self concept, emotions and attitude. Although self-esteem is defined as an overall evaluation of an individual’s attitude toward, themselves [17; 18; 19]. The finding was not complied with the standard definition. Conversely, strong disagreement exists concerning specifically on what self-esteem is. Self-satisfaction can also access one’s happiness as a person [20]. Analysis indicated that self esteem and self satisfaction has a direct and positive relationship with each other. With the increase in self satisfaction the self esteem also increases and vice versa [21].

Media has highly influenced today’s youth towards modernization and material culture which intern has put a significant effect on their self satisfaction and self esteem. It has also put a great impact on the youth way of living on cultural value system and on their thought process. When the self esteem and self satisfaction has been evaluated on the basis of materialistic and non materialistic values it was observed that Participants who live in material culture such as throwing parties, using modern gadgets, having partner, etc leading a stimulating life are found to be derived low self esteem. On the other hand those living in non material culture; that value, tradition, security are comparatively reported to have high self esteem [14].

The limitation of the study was that the youths were asked to give opinion regarding self satisfaction with respect to material and non material culture. But it is believed that the respondents might have given a general opinion.

Our finding suggest that system of building self esteem is an important channel through which individual internalise the value at an implicit level even if they claim not to subscribe this value when explicitly asked. In previous studies, it was found that materialistic individuals are less satisfied with their lives [13; 22; 23]. Ethical value should be inculcated right from the childhood at the family level to
help and absorb the cultural morals and behavior traits in an individual. However, inclusion of ethical and spiritual based education at school level is important to meet the moral challenges of the society.

References


Competing interest:
“The author(s) declare(s) that they have no competing interests”.