

A Study of Relationship Satisfaction and Self-Esteem among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The present research was purposed to study the effect of gender on the level of relationship satisfaction and self-esteem among adolescents. For this, 400 adolescents were selected as the sample. Among them, 200 were boys and 200 were girls. They were in the age group of 13 to 18 years. Relationship Satisfaction Scale by Hendrick (1988) and Self-Esteem Scale by Rosenberg (1965) were administered on the adolescents. Results have shown that relationship satisfaction was found to be better in boys than girls. Also, boys have higher self-esteem in comparison with girls.

Keywords- Relationship Satisfaction; Self-Esteem; Gender; Boys; Girls

Introduction:-

Relationship Satisfaction refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of their contentment and fulfillment within a personal relationship. This evaluation encompasses various aspects of relational functioning, such as emotional connection, communication, conflict resolution, and shared goals. Relationship satisfaction is a dynamic construct, influenced by both internal factors, such as personality traits and emotional stability, and external factors, such as life events, social norms, and economic conditions. It is a central component in determining the quality of close relationships, particularly romantic ones, but also applies to friendships, familial ties, and even professional relationships. At its core, relationship satisfaction can be understood as the degree to which individuals feel that their needs and expectations are met within a relationship. These needs may include emotional intimacy, affection, trust, security, and personal growth. Satisfaction arises when individuals perceive a positive balance between the rewards and costs associated with maintaining the relationship. For example, if a relationship provides

support, companionship, and love while minimizing conflict or emotional strain, the individuals involved are likely to feel satisfied.

Self-esteem is a complex psychological construct that refers to an individual's overall subjective evaluation of their worth or value. It encompasses beliefs, emotions, and thoughts about one self and is often manifested in self-acceptance and self-respect. Self-esteem plays a critical role in mental health, influencing various aspects of behaviour, motivation, and interpersonal relationships. The concept has gained significant attention across multiple fields, including psychology, sociology, and education, due to its implications for personal development, academic achievement, and overall well-being. Self-esteem is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including early experiences, social comparisons, cultural context, relationships, achievements, life events, personal attributes, physical appearance, and media exposure. Recognizing and understanding these influences can aid individuals in fostering healthier self-esteem and promoting overall

psychological well-being. Efforts to cultivate self-esteem often involve addressing negative influences, reinforcing positive experiences, and developing resilience and self-compassion.

Objectives:

The present study was carried out with following objectives:-

1. To assess the level of relationship satisfaction and self-esteem among the adolescents.
2. To find out the effect of gender on the level of relationship satisfaction among the adolescents.
3. To explore the difference in level of self-esteem among the boy and girl adolescents.

Research Variables:

- Dependent Variable:- Relationship Satisfaction, Self-Esteem
- Independent Variable:- Gender

Research Hypotheses- The main hypotheses of the research were as follows: -

1. There would be significant difference between boys and girls in terms of relationship satisfaction.
2. There would be significant difference between boys and girls in terms of self-esteem.

Research Methodology-

A. Sample of the study-

A sample of 400 adolescents was selected as the sample from different schools of Bihar. Among them, 200 were boys and 200 were girls. They were in the age group of 13 to 18 years. They were selected randomly with consideration of some inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion Criteria:

- School Students
- Age range between 13 to 18 years
- Residing in Bihar state

Exclusion Criteria:

- Age below 13 years and above 18 years
- Residing outside Bihar

- Psychiatric and psychosomatic disorder

B. Research Variables:

The details of the variables of this study are as follows:-

1. Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is a key index used to measure the quality of a relationship. It refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of their contentment and fulfillment within a personal relationship. This evaluation encompasses various aspects of relational functioning, such as emotional connection, communication, conflict resolution, and shared goals. Relationship satisfaction is a dynamic construct, influenced by both internal factors, such as personality traits and emotional stability, and external factors, like life events, social norms, and economic conditions.

2. Self Esteem- Self-esteem encompasses beliefs, emotions, and thoughts about oneself and is often manifested in self-acceptance and self-respect. Self-esteem plays a critical role in mental health, influencing various aspects of behaviour, motivation, and interpersonal relationships. The concept has gained significant attention across multiple fields, including psychology, sociology, and education, due to its implications for personal development, academic achievement, and overall well-being.

3. Gender- Gender is a person's recognition and identity which means having some characteristics that relate to the categories male, female, or some other. It refers to the social, cultural and psychological meanings that are associated with masculinity and femininity. On the other side, word sex means the biological category of male and female. In Psychology, there have been numerous studies about the effect of gender on different psychological aspects. In this study, two types of gender (male and female) have been selected.

C. Research Tool-

There were two scales have been used in this study. The details of the scales are as follows:-

1. Relationship Assessment Scale-

This scale was developed by Hendrick (1988). It is a 7-item scale designed to measure general relationship satisfaction with 5- point Likert scales (1 = Low, 5 = High). Respondents answer each item using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction). It has reliability with an alpha of 0.86, a mean inter-item correlation of 0.49, and a test-retest reliability of 0.85.

2. Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale-

This scale was developed by Rosenberg (1965). It is a 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is uni-dimensional. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

D.Research Design- Between group research design has been used in this study.

E.Data Collection Procedure-

Each respondent was approached individually. Before recording the responses, an attempt was made to develop a rapport with the subjects. In course of conversation, the respondents were requested to respond honestly and genuinely on the scales. If the respondents needed any clarification on any question, it was clarified to them so that they could respond without any confusion and with complete understanding.

F. Data Analysis- The obtained data has been analysed using different statistical techniques like Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-test.

Results- Results have been presented through Table-1 and 2.

Table-1

Mean Scores of Boy and Girl Adolescents on the Measure of Relationship Satisfaction

	Boys (N=200)	Girls (N=200)
Mean	24.22	22.75
SD	4.08	3.41
t-ratio	4.32	P<.01

df= 398

Table-1 presents the mean scores of boy and girl adolescents on the measure of Relationship Satisfaction. Here, it can be observed that boys have obtained higher mean score than girls. It means that boys have higher satisfaction in their relationships as compared to girls. The t-ratio has been found to be significant. This supports the first hypothesis of the study that “There would be significant difference between boys and girls in terms of relationship satisfaction.”

In the Indian context, maintaining relationships is a major life lesson which each family teaches to its female members more importantly. The maximum compromises that can be made to maintain a relationship are done by the female members of the family. This may be the reason why their expectations from the relationships are not fulfilled and have lesser satisfaction. One possible explanation of the results is that individuals who are not satisfied with their relationship may feel less fulfilled and are less connected to their partners, increasing the inclination to engage in phubbing behaviour as an escape from reality. They are more likely to seek distractions or escape from their relationship through excessive phone use (Wei, 2019).

Gao, Liu, Shen, Fu, Li, & Li (2023) indicated that negative impacts of phubbing on social interactions are poor interpersonal relationships, social-ethical issues, and passiveness during interpersonal conversations. In the Indian social context, women are treated as submissive and inferior. Hence, they are deprived and remain aloof from the developmental indices. The patriarchal nature of society also influences their lives adversely. The Investment Model of Relationship Satisfaction, developed by Caryl Rusbult, posits that relationship satisfaction is influenced by the investments individuals make in the relationship, such as time, energy, and emotional commitment. In case of phubber, they do not get attention, care, and attachment of the people because they are always busy on their phones. This results lack of relations among them and they feel isolated and alone. As they do not invest much in

their relations, they do not get support in return. Gradually they become dissatisfied in their relationships. Boys in contrast, have lesser rate of phubbing behaviour. Therefore, they effectively enjoy their social bonding and have more relationship satisfaction than girls. Strong social support from friends and family can buffer against stress and enhance relationship satisfaction.

Table-2

Mean Scores of Boy and Girl Adolescents on the Measure of Self-Esteem

	Boys (N=200)	Girls (N=200)
Mean	30.26	28.11
SD	4.01	3.23
t-ratio	6.32	P<.001

df= 398

Table-2 illustrates the mean scores of boy and girl adolescents on the measure of Self-Esteem. It is clear that the mean of boys and girls is significantly different. Boys have higher level of self-esteem in comparison with girls. This finding supports the fifth hypothesis of the study that “There would be significant difference between boys and girls in terms of self-esteem.”

The patriarchal mind-set of the Indian society considers boys as stronger and more desirable. Because of this, girls often have negative self-perception. This produces the sense of insecurity and somehow inferiority which result in low self-esteem. For instance, Rizwaan and Zaidi (2005) found that males are higher than females on self-esteem. Cooke (1999) has found that adolescent girls tend to have lower self-esteem than boys. Kling, Hyde, Showers, Buswell (1999) did meta-analysis to find out the effect of gender on self-esteem. They found males had higher self-esteem as compared to females. The study of Quatman & Watson (2001) also supports the above-mentioned findings. Moksnes & Espnes

(2013) displayed through their research that boys scored higher than girls on both self-esteem and life satisfaction. The findings of Lalngaihawmi, Tungdim, Chiinkhualkim, & Niangthiannei (2024) revealed a statistically significant relationship between gender and self-esteem and suggested that gender is essential in forming individuals’ self-esteem levels.

It has also been observed that self-esteem is closely related to healthy social relations. Individuals with healthy self-esteem typically exhibit secure attachments, fostering positive relationships. In contrast, those with low self-esteem may struggle with intimacy, fear rejection, or engage in self-sabotaging behaviour. Boys have shown relationship satisfaction and here they are higher on self-esteem in comparison with girls. In the current scenario, the looks and physical characteristics are not the only indices of self-esteem but personality traits and effective communication skills are very important too. Self-esteem is shaped by interactions with others and the surrounding environment. Boys have better social interaction than girls. The social environment plays a crucial role in shaping self-esteem. Cultural norms and societal values can dictate standards for success and approval, influencing individuals’ self-evaluations. It is also associated with self-control. Girls lack social environment and hence they pose low self-esteem as compared to boys.

Major findings of the study:

1. Relationship satisfaction was found to be better in boys than girls.
2. Boys have higher self-esteem in comparison with girls.

Conclusion:

Conclusively, it can be stated that gender is a determining factor in development of relationship satisfaction and self-esteem among adolescents.

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