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THE INFLUENCE OF PEER ATTACHMENT ON THE SELF-ESTEEM OF ADOLESCENTS

Sunita and Pinki Rani

Ph. D Scholar ,

Human Development and Family Studies ,
COHS, CCS HAU Hisar.



ABSTRACT

Peer attachments play a very important role in determining high self-esteem of students. Self-esteem can be defined as an individual's attitude about him or herself, involving self-evaluation along a positive- negative dimension. Most generally self-esteem refers to an individual's over all positive evaluation to the self. The study was conducted in Hisar District of Haryana state. All the adolescents studying in 9th and 10th standard falling in the age group 15 – 16 years were included in the sample for the study. Self-esteem was taken as dependent variable. Self-Esteem was assessed by Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) by Rosenberg's (1989). Peer attachment was taken as Independent variable. Result revealed that a keen observation of mean scores of adolescent's self-esteem revealed that who reported lowest trust on their peers had low self-esteem and they significantly differed from adolescents who reported highest trust on their peers. But non-significant differences were observed with average category of trust on their peers. Further, mean scores reflected that the respondents having lowest level of communication with peers had lowest self-esteem and differed significantly from adolescents who reported highest communication with peers. But non-significant differences were observed with average category of communication on their peers. Reports on alienation with peers revealed that self-esteem means scores of adolescents who reported highest alienation from peers had lower self-esteem and they were significantly differed from average and below average peer alienation categories.

KEYWORDS: Adolescents, self-esteem, peer attachments, communication, experience and life challenge.

INTRODUCTION

Self esteem continues to be one of the most commonly research concept in social psychology (Baumeister, 1993). Teachers, ?administrators and parents are commonly concerned about student's self-esteem. Its significance is often exaggerated to the extent that low self-esteem is viewed as the cause of all evil and high self-esteem as the cause of all good (Manning et al., 2006). Self-esteem is associated with depression, anxiety, motivation and general satisfaction with one's life (Rosenberg, 1986).

Self-esteem can be defined as an individual's attitude about him or herself, involving self-evaluation along a positive- negative dimension (Baron and Byrne, 1991). Most generally self-esteem refers to an individual's over all positive evaluation to the self (Rosenberg et al., 1995). Reasoner (2005) has defined self-esteem as the experience of capable of meeting life challenge and being worthy of happiness. In today's world self-esteem has been viewed as an important tool to face the competitive life. Modern living has brought with it, not only innumerable means of comfort but also a plethora of demands that tax human body and mind. Now a day's everyone talks about stress. It is cutting across all socio economic groups of population and becomes the

great leveler and continuous stress over a period of time takes the form of depression.

Since its origin, attachment research has focused primarily on the study of attachment bonds in early childhood (Bowlby, 1982). Lately, however, attachment has been re-conceptualized to include other significant relationships, such as those with peers. From an attachment perspective, adolescence is marked by critical changes in cognitive, behavioural, and emotional systems. Adolescents develop their own points of view and separate them from their parents (Bowlby, 1982). Further, the transition to adolescence implies a modification in the family balance between connectedness and autonomy. Indeed, during this developmental phase, adolescents search greater independence and autonomy from their parents.

Peer attachments play a very important role in determining high self-esteem of students. The security of the attachment relationship provides the basis for the child's development of independence in conflicts and depression (Allen and Hauser, 1996).

Adolescence is understood as a time of increased autonomy and experimentation; a time when peer relationships become increasingly important, and when the risk of engagement in potentially harmful behaviors becomes a salient area of concern (Laible et al., 2004). Throughout this period of development, parent-child relationships change in many important ways. From the outside, it can see as though adolescents and their parents become less close during this time. However, from the perspective of attachment theory, relationships with attachment figures remain one of the most influential factors in nearly every aspect of a person's life into adolescence and beyond.

During adolescence, the primary task of separation-individuation occurs, mirroring the differentiation of the individual self-concept during the first year of life, and the success of which heavily depends upon the security of the attachment relationship up until the adolescent years. This process has implications for the adolescent's self-esteem (Laible et al., 2004).

Self-esteem is intertwined and contributes to negative effects. There are theoretical reasons to believe that self-esteem might be particularly strongly linked during adolescence and young adulthood. The confluences of changes that occur during this developmental stage are likely to tax the individual's psychological resources, and previous research has suggested that the link between self-esteem and depression might be stronger during stressful events.

Moreover, one of the core developmental tasks of this stage of life centers on developing a sense of mastery and competence (Galambos et al., 2006), which are closely linked to self-esteem. Thus, it seems plausible that all aspects of adjustment and adaptation, including indicators of well being such as depression, would be particularly linked to success in achieving the salient developmental task of this period, establishing a sense of competence and self-worth.

Research conducted in the Indian context suggests that socio-emotional problems like attachment difficulties with parents and interpersonal conflicts with peers are relatively common in adolescence, and may contribute to impaired feelings of self-esteem. Thus the present study was carried out with the following objectives.

OBJECTIVES:

- To study the influence of peer attachment on self-esteem.

METHODOLOGY:

The study was planned to investigating levels of Self-Esteem among adolescents living in rural and urban areas. To understand the features of adolescents, comparative rural and urban area study is an essential tool. As per objectives, the study was conducted in Hisar district of Haryana state purposively selected due to easy accessibility. To draw the rural sample, list of villages having Government schools with 9th and 10th classes was obtained from the Education Department, Hisar. Out of the list, three villages namely Neoli Kala, Behbalpur and Mangali were randomly selected and Government Senior Secondary Schools of these villages were taken to draw the rural sample. Whereas, to draw urban sample Government Girls Senior Secondary School, Hisar and Government Senior Secondary School, Hisar (Patel Nagar) were randomly selected. All the adolescents studying

in 9th and 10th standard falling in the age group 15 – 16 years were included in the sample for the study.

Variable is a set of value that forms a classification. A value is anything which can be predicted. For the present study, the variables have been grouped into two types the dependent and independent variables. A dependent variable is a variable presumed to be affected by one or more independent variables. Self-esteem was taken as dependent variable. Self-Esteem was assessed by Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) by Rosenberg's (1989). Peer attachment was taken as independent variables.

RESULTS:

Comparison of self-esteem across peer attachment

Comparison of adolescents' self-esteem scores on the basis of levels of peer attachment has been portrayed in table 30. Duncan multiple comparison test divulged significant differences on the basis of different categories of peer trust ($F(2,275) = 8.10$), peer communication ($F(2,275) = 5.14$) and peer alienation $F(2,275) = 3.81$ at 0.05 per cent level of significance in self-esteem mean scores. A keen observation of mean scores of adolescents self-esteem revealed that who reported lowest ($M=14.90$) trust on their peers had low self-esteem and they significantly differed from adolescents who reported highest ($M=18.66$) trust on their peers. But non-significant differences were observed with average ($M=16.74$) category of trust on their peers. Further, mean scores reflected that the respondents having lowest ($M=16.17$) level of communication with peers had lowest self-esteem and differed significantly from adolescents who reported highest ($M=18.88$) communication with peers. But non-significant differences were observed with average ($M=17.54$) category of communication on their peers. Reports on alienation with peers revealed that self-esteem means scores of adolescents who reported highest ($M=15.80$) alienation from peers had lower self-esteem and they were significantly differed from average ($M=17.50$) and below average ($M=18.81$) peer alienation categories.

Table 30: Comparison of self-esteem across peer attachment

| Sr No. | Peer attachment | | | |
|--------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------|
| 1. | Trust | | | |
| | Low Mean \pm S.D. | Average Mean \pm S.D. | High Mean \pm S.D. | F-value |
| | 14.90 ^a \pm 2.66 | 16.74 ^{ab} \pm 3.47 | 18.66 ^b \pm 4.62 | 8.10* |
| 2. | Communication | | | |
| | Low Mean \pm S.D. | Average Mean \pm S.D. | High Mean \pm S.D. | |
| | 16.17 ^a \pm 3.98 | 17.54 ^{ab} \pm 4.12 | 18.88 ^b \pm 4.61 | 5.14* |
| 3. | Alienation | | | |
| | Low Mean \pm S.D. | Average Mean \pm S.D. | High Mean \pm S.D. | |
| | 18.81 ^c \pm 4.53 | 17.50 ^b \pm 4.28 | 15.80 ^a \pm 3.19 | 3.81* |

Note: Means in the same row that do not share superscripts differ at $p < 0.05$ using Duncan multiple difference comparison

DISCUSSION:

The results indicated that peers attachment indicated significant differences. Peers attachment was higher than both parent attachments. Although traditional attachment theory has generally promoted the influence of parents in a child representation of relationships, the possibility arises that in adolescents peers attachment figure may be just as influential in an adolescent's representation of relationships and therefore in promoting adolescent adjustment. The possibility that peers may be more influential as attachment figures in adolescence is echoed in the support literature, which has suggested that adolescents begin to rely on peers more often than parents as source of support.. Guarnieri et al. (2010) reported that trust, communication was

higher with peers followed by mothers and fathers among the adolescents.

Further result indicated significant differences in adolescent's parent peer attachment (communication and alienation) against family structure. The adolescents living in extended families were having more parent peer attachment (communication) and were lower on alienation. The results get strength from the study by Kenny and Sirin (2006) who reported that attachment of adolescents with grandparent, aunt/ uncle, foster parents, or guardian might be more relevant as compared to nuclear families.

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