IMPACT OF GENDER DIVERSITY ON THE SELF ESTEEM OF GIRLS IN PAKISTAN

Dr. Abdul Sattar Almani
Mashooq Ali Khowaja

ABSTRACT

Self-esteem is a state of mind in which people feel, evaluate and like themselves. Different persons have different degree of self esteem and it varies from person to person and society to society. The social patterns and home environment of Pakistani society indicates that girls are treated differently than boys. To investigate the impact of this difference on the self-esteem of male and female college students a hypothesis was developed. Five rural and urban colleges of Sindh had participated in this study with a sample of 188 students. An independent sample t test was used through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). It was found that there is a significant difference in the self esteem scores of male and female college students. This study can suitably be generalized to all Pakistan because of same social, cultural and religious patterns.

INTRODUCTION

Gender Diversity through Nations

Throughout recorded history it is evident that there is great divide between men and women and women are considered inferior and un-equal to men. Clarken (1995) points the pathetic picture:

> "Men have suppressed women physically, emotionally, psychologically. This in-equality has been supported by religions, philosophies, traditions and customs of past".

This in-equality, injustice and suppression do not come from the culture and society alone but women face these hardships by their near and dear ones who, being the elders of their homes or leaders of the family or clan, hatch conspiracies against them. A study in Philippines found major violence by their near and dear ones. The same study indicates that 13 per cent violence is committed by husbands to their wives (Hindin and Linda, 2000).

In addition to home, women are also victims of certain family patterns, traditional values and old customs present in the society. Those customs and traditions are made by male dominated societies through centuries and are present in almost all the societies of the world. These customs have made women more weak and submissive in comparison to men in the society. In India, family members believe that if pregnant women will eat little then they will have smaller babies therefore they are compelled to eat less (Raju *et. al.*, 2000).

Disparity in Pakistan

The status of women varies from region to region in Pakistan. She faces inequality, injustice and violence irrespective of class, religion and rural-urban divide. Some of the factors responsible for their inequality are traditional gender stereotyping ideas, job restrictions, and the patriarchal socio-economical structure present in the rural areas since long.

Right from birth women faces hard-ships. They are not welcome in family as a female child because they will not earn but will create problems for family. This thought is communicated to girl children in many families that they are not welcomed. Again they are told that their willingness, food, clothing, health or education does not mean, they have to give sacrifice for all these privileges over their mail siblings. Additionally, limited resources force parents to give high priority to their sons' education rather than daughters' (Ahmed, 2001).

Women are narrated that their opinion as well as happiness has no value, they don't need to think about themselves. Their parents will decide each and every thing for them and the head of family, who happens to be male, is the sole owner of their lives and fate; what he decides they have to obey. These words from their near and dear ones not only destroy their self identity and self esteem but also create fear, insecurity and anxiety which sometimes lead to aggressive thoughts and suicide. Mostly they become silent and many a times they think that feminism is a curse.

Pakistan's former prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, endorsed the above mentioned painful state of affairs by expressing her views on gender diversity in Pakistan in her address to the United Nations' fourth world conference on women in September 1995. Her comments were reported by *Los Angles Times*. She affirmed that Pakistani society was male dominated and gender discrimination had been afflicting since centuries. According to her, when a family could afford basic facilities of health and education, the same were given to male children while female children remained the second priority (Bhutto, 1995).

In addition to inequalities and disparities, violence in its varying forms is another most influencing tool used by family, society and state against women to stop the voice of women in male dominated society. Marriages without girls' consent, child brides, selling and buying women as a commodity in *watta satta* (exchange of girls within families), using women to settle family disputes, marriage to the *Holy Quran* and *karo kari* (honor killing) are some of the reported forms of violence in Pakistan.

Violence at home by husband or elder of the family is well reported in various studies. A United Nations research study (Tinker, 1999) observed that many women in Pakistan are subjected to physical and mental violence. He said that they are physically battered by their husbands and other family members. In another study by Women's Division on "Battered Housewives in Pakistan (National Commission Report, 1997), it is revealed that in Pakistan majority of housewives are subjected to violence of different kinds. Yet in another report, Rehman (1998) indicates that among 400 reported cases of home violence, 50% of the victims had died.

In another study Zia and Bari (1999) expressing the violence to women in Pakistan wrote that most of the girls and women are victims of their own relatives.

Violence is not present at home or in society alone but the state functionaries also play their part in increasing the miseries of women in Pakistan. A large number of women are victimized by

police and other law enforcement agencies. Once in custody, women are treated in coarse manner and are subjected to indecency compelling them to satiate sexual whims of senior male police officers (National Commission on Women, 1997).

Women are not only treated as unequal or inferior in social matters but they are also deprived of their due share in jobs and education. The educational status of Pakistani women is more distressing and it is at the lowest in the world (World Bank, 1989).

Table 1 describes discriminatory characteristics of young population, male and female distinguished, of Pakistan in quantitative terms.

Table-1
Vital Statistics for Pakistan

Total Population of Pakistan (2007)	**162.5 million**	
Female population (% of total population)	**48.5 %**	
	Males (% of male population aged 15 +)	**Females (% of female population aged 15 +)**
Labor force participation	84.9	20. 8
Unemployment	4.5	8.4
Net Primary School Enrollment	73.5	57.3
Net Secondary School Enrollment	33.3	25.8
Gross Tertiary School Enrollment	4.9	4.2
Adult Literacy	67.7	39.6

Source: *Asia Pacific Human Development Report, 2007.*

Self-esteem and Gender

Self esteem can be defined as how people see and weigh themselves. It is universally believed that adolescent period in the girls is turning point in which many physical and mental developments take place. The development of gender role in boys and girls is the important developmental task of this age (Kohlberg, 1966). During this period children learn many habits and traits from home and parents and from society as well. Researchers converge on the opinion that girls in this period receive many messages from society and from the culture that influence their personality and they adopt some behaviors in return (Basow, 1999). They theorize that adolescence is a very crucial period in which gender roles and attitudes are made and developed and during adolescence stage gender roles took place in both genders and each gender gets different roles (Miller, 1976; Hill & Lynch, 1983).

During this period self esteem is influenced by many factors. Those factors play a very important role in the life of girls (Osborne, 1997). These factors relate to the home environment and social environment. In home environment, parents and family play a very important role for development of positive or negative self-esteem; while in social environment, schools, friends and peers have their role. In addition to both these factors, traditions and customs have vital importance in development of various behaviors in girls.

Large amount of research suggests that family support contribute a lot on self-esteem of an individual. Again parent's role is much important in the development of positive self-esteem of their child. Their interest in the child and their influences make different kind of individuals.

Yabiku, Axinn, and Thornton (1999) concluded in their study that with the help of love and support, parents can promote the self-esteem of their children. In another study (Kohlberg, 1966) found that those individuals who are respected within their age groups have lower levels of fear and shame in comparison to those individuals who are not respected within their groups. Yet

Mandara and Murrey (2000) have concluded that family pattern and working has direct relationship with the self-esteem of a child. Bem's (1983) gender schema theory suggests that culturally prescribed practices are responsible for low or high self-esteem in individuals of both sexes.

METHOD

Participants

The total five colleges of Sindh had participated in this study. The sample frequency is presented in Table 2. Total number of respondents were 188 i.e. 102 male and 86 female. The gender statistics is shown in Table 3.

Table-2
The Sample Statistics

Name of College	Frequency (n)	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Govt. Boys College Nawabshah	60	31.9	31.9	31.9
Govt. Girls College Nawabshah	60	31.9	31.9	63.8
Cadet College Petaro	19	10.1	10.1	73.9
Govt. Zubeda Girls College Hyderabad	26	13.8	13.8	87.8
Govt. Boys College Matiyari	23	12.2	12.2	100.0
Total	**188**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table-3
The Gender Statistics

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
male	102	54.3	54.3	54.3
female	86	45.7	45.7	100.0
Total	**188**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Instrument

The Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory (SEI) (Adult Version) was used to assess self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1981). The SEI is a 25-question scale. Each question is answered with either a "like me" or "unlike me" response. The items of inventory were highly correlated with other scales. While comparing SEI with Rosenberg scale, Shaver and Robinson (1973) found that the reliability index was 0.59 and 0.60, which is highly reliable ratio (Coopersmith, 1981).

RESULTS

To explore and verify the theory, a hypothesis was developed and data was collected and analyzed. It was assumed that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female college students. To analyze the data, an independent samples t test was used on SPSS 10. The significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students was found and null hypothesis was rejected. For the means and standard deviations of the scales and standard error of mean, see Table 4. Table 5 shows the calculated value of independent sample t test which is 5.58. As this value is much higher than the tabulated value of 1.92 at given degree of freedom and at an alpha level of 0.5; null hypothesis therefore is rejected and it may be concluded that there is a significant difference of self esteem between male and female Pakistani college students.

Table-4
The Descriptive Statistics

GENDER	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	102	15.6471	3.1737	0.3142
Female	86	12.9535	3.4297	0.3698

Table-5
The Independent Sample t Test

	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equalv-ariances assumed	0.854	0.357	**5.587**	186	0.00	2.6936	0.4821	1.7425	3.6447
Equalv-ariances not assumed			**5.550**	175.2	0.00	2.6936	0.4853	1.7358	3.6514

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to see the difference of self esteem in Pakistani male and female college students. To meet this purpose, the authors have reviewed the literature related to Pakistani society and found that injustice with women is present in many forms. Home, school, culture and state treat male and female individuals separately. As mentioned in review of literature above, this study confirms that a large number of cultural practices present in Pakistani society are responsible for lack of self-esteem in girls. It was found that there is significant difference of self esteem between male and female Pakistani students. Incidentally the results of this study were consistent with many other studies outside Pakistan, which can lay the foundation for several future researches in Pakistan by investigating the factors of home, school, society and state separately.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, Mubashir. (2001). 'Bridging The Gender Divide', *Dawn,* November 25.

Asia Pacific Human Development report 2007. http://www.undp.org.pk/8thissue/more/Pakistan%20rankings%20&%20indices.pdf

Basow, S. A. (1999). 'Gender Influences on Adolescent Development' in N. G. Johnson, M. C. Roberts, & J. Worell (Eds.). *Childhood and Society.* New York: Norton.

Bem, S. L. (1983). 'Gender Schema Theory and its Implications for Child Development', *Sign,* 8, 598-616.

Bhutto, B. (1995). 'Girls Have an Especially Long Way to Go', *Los Angles Times*, September 1, p.4.

Clarken, R.H. (1995). 'Towards Bias-Free Teaching: Gender Equity in the Classroom', Paper presented at the United Nations, August 31-September 8, 1995.

Coopersmith, S. (1981). *Self-Esteem Inventories.* Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Hill, J. P., & Lynch, M. E. (1983). 'The Intensification Of Gender-Related Role Expectations During Early Adolescence' in J. Brooks-Gunn & A. C. Petersen (Eds.), *Girls at Puberty: Biological and Psychological Perspectives.* New York.

Hindin, Michelle J. and Linda, S. Adair. (2000). 'Women's Autonomy, Men's Autonomy and Gender Violence in the Philippines: The Case for Promoting Couple Communication', paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, Los Angeles, California, 23-25 March 2000.

Kohlberg LA. A. (1966). 'Cognitive-Developmental Analysis of Children's Sex Role Concepts and Attitudes' in Maccoby EE, ed. *The Development of Sex Differences.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Miller, J. B. (1976). *Toward a New Psychology of Women.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press

Mandara, J. & Murrey, C. B. (2000). 'Effects of Parental Marital Status, Income, and Family Functioning on African American Adolescent Self-Esteem', *Journal of Family Psychology*, 14, 475-490.

National Commission on the Status of Women. (1997). *Report on the Status of Women in Pakistan.* Islamabad.

Osborne, J. (1997). 'Identification with Academics and Academic Success Among Community College Students', *Community College Review*, 25.

Raju, Saraswati, and Ann Leonard (2000). *Men as Supportive Partners in Reproductive Health: Moving From Myth to Reality.* New Delhi: The Population Council.

Rehman, I.A. (1998). *The Legal Rights of Women in Pakistan: Theory and Practice.* Karachi: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

Zia, Shahla & Bari, Farzana. (1999). 'Women's Political Participation in Pakistan', paper presented in the Seminar on Civil Liberties, Islamabad.

Shaver, P., & Robinson, J.P.R. (1973). 'Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes', *Social Research Journal*, Vol.9, No.XIV.

Tinker, G.A.(1999). *Improving Women's Health in Pakistan.* Karachi: World Bank.

Yabiku, S. T, Axinn, W. G., & Thornton, A. (1999). 'Family Integration and Children's Self-Esteem', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 104, 1494.

*****