

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SELF-ESTEEM BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE TEACHERS IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims at assessing self-esteem among male and female primary and secondary school teachers. This investigation delves into the nuanced psychological dynamics that shape educators' self-perception in diverse professional contexts, highlighting potential disparities that could influence teaching efficacy and overall well-being. The sample included a total of 60 teachers of public and private schools, carefully selected to represent a balanced cross-section of the educational workforce in a specific regional setting. Independent variables are Gender (Male and Female) and School Level (Primary and Secondary), allowing for a targeted examination of how these factors intersect with personal self-evaluation. A total of 60 data points were collected using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965), a widely validated instrument known for its brevity and reliability in capturing core aspects of self-worth. Analysis was carried out using SPSS software, which facilitated robust statistical processing and visualization of the results. Independent samples t-tests were used to determine significance, providing a straightforward yet powerful method to uncover group differences. The results show: (1) There is a significant difference between male and female teachers with regard to self-esteem, underscoring the role of gender-specific experiences in the teaching environment. Female teachers reported higher self-esteem than male teachers, a finding that aligns with emerging trends in educational psychology where relational strengths may bolster women's professional confidence. (2) There is no significant difference between primary and secondary school teachers with regard to self-esteem, suggesting that the core elements of self-worth in educators transcend the structural divides of school levels. These outcomes contribute to a broader understanding of teacher mental health, offering insights that could inform targeted interventions.

Key Words: Self-Esteem, Gender, Primary Teachers, Secondary Teachers

INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem is a global evaluation of self-worth (Rosenberg, 1965), serving as a foundational psychological construct that influences how individuals navigate their personal and professional lives. It encompasses not just a static sense of value but a dynamic interplay of emotions, thoughts, and behaviors that evolve over time and across contexts. In the realm of education, where self-esteem can directly impact instructional quality and student interactions, understanding its variations among teachers becomes particularly crucial. It is linked with performance, confidence, and adjustment (Baumeister, 1993), as higher levels of self-esteem often correlate with greater resilience against workplace stressors, enhanced problem-solving abilities, and more positive interpersonal relationships. For instance, teachers with robust self-esteem are better equipped to handle classroom challenges, foster inclusive environments, and model healthy self-perception for their students, thereby creating a ripple effect throughout the educational ecosystem.

Teaching is a profession with high demands, characterized by multifaceted responsibilities that range from lesson planning and student assessment to administrative duties and emotional labor. These demands can sometimes erode personal resources, leading to burnout or diminished job satisfaction if not balanced with adequate support structures. Male and female teachers face different situations, influenced by societal expectations, cultural norms, and institutional biases that shape their daily experiences. For example, female teachers might encounter more frequent expectations around nurturing roles, while male teachers could face pressures related to authority and leadership stereotypes. Some evidence shows female teachers report higher self-esteem in relational domains (Kling et al., 1999; Yu, Nickerson, & Carey, 2022), where the interpersonal nature of teaching provides opportunities for validation and fulfillment that align closely with gender-specific socialization patterns. This relational advantage may stem from women's often greater emphasis on empathy and connection, which are highly rewarded in educational settings. Conversely, male teachers might grapple with narrower pathways to self-affirmation, potentially leading to lower reported self-esteem in similar environments.

Teachers at different school levels face different tasks, with primary educators focusing on foundational skill-building and holistic child development, while secondary teachers emphasize subject specialization and adolescent guidance. These distinct roles can influence stress levels, autonomy, and perceived success, all of which feed into self-esteem. Research shows little consistent

difference between primary and secondary teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017), indicating that overarching professional factors like institutional support and personal efficacy might overshadow level-specific variances. This lack of stark differentiation suggests a unifying thread in the teaching profession, where self-esteem is more a function of intrinsic motivation and external reinforcement than hierarchical positioning. By exploring these dimensions, the current study seeks to illuminate pathways for enhancing teacher well-being across the spectrum.

DEFINITIONS OF SELF-ESTEEM

1. "Self-esteem is the evaluative component of the self-concept, consisting of positive or negative evaluations of the self." – Baumeister (1993). This definition highlights the judgmental aspect of how individuals appraise their own traits, abilities, and overall value, often drawing from a lifetime of accumulated experiences and reflections. It underscores the binary nature of self-evaluation, where positive assessments foster growth and negative ones can hinder progress, making it a pivotal element in psychological health.
2. "Self-esteem is an individual's confidence in balancing internal capabilities against external demands." – Rosenberg (1965). Here, the emphasis is on equilibrium, portraying self-esteem as a measure of perceived competence in harmonizing personal strengths with the world's requirements. This perspective is especially relevant in high-stakes professions like teaching, where educators must continually adapt their skills to meet diverse student needs and administrative expectations.
3. "Self-esteem results from ongoing interaction between self-perception and social feedback, determining acceptance or drive for improvement." – Branden (1994). This relational view positions self-esteem as a product of dialogue between internal narratives and external inputs, such as praise, criticism, or peer interactions. In educational contexts, this interaction can manifest through student achievements, colleague collaborations, or parental communications, each contributing to a teacher's sense of acceptance or motivation for professional development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Benevene, Ittan, and Cortini (2018) studied Italian teachers, focusing on a cohort of public school educators to explore the interplay of psychological factors in professional longevity. They examined self-esteem and happiness as predictors of health, using structural equation modeling to dissect causal pathways. They found that job satisfaction fully mediated the relationship of self-esteem and happiness with health outcomes, implying that a fulfilling work environment amplifies the protective effects of positive self-regard against physical and mental strain. This mediation suggests practical implications, such as prioritizing satisfaction-enhancing policies to bolster teacher resilience.

Kling et al. (1999) studied gender and self-esteem through a comprehensive meta-analysis encompassing over 200 studies and thousands of participants across age groups. They found that males often show higher self-esteem in adolescence, attributed to societal privileges and achievement-oriented norms, but females sometimes report higher self-esteem in professional roles, particularly those involving caregiving or collaboration. This shift in adulthood highlights the adaptive nature of self-esteem, where professional contexts can equalize or even reverse earlier disparities by providing women with affirming relational experiences.

Yu, Nickerson, and Carey (2022) found that female teachers scored higher on relational and communicative self-esteem, based on a survey of over 500 U.S. educators using domain-specific scales. Social validation in teaching may explain this difference, as the profession's emphasis on empathy and dialogue resonates more with female socialization patterns, leading to greater self-affirmation through daily interactions. Their study also noted that this relational boost correlated with lower turnover intentions, underscoring self-esteem's role in retention.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) studied self-esteem across school levels in a Norwegian sample of 2,000 teachers, employing multilevel modeling to account for school-level variances. They found that professional identity was more important than school level, with self-efficacy and goal alignment emerging as stronger predictors of self-esteem regardless of primary or secondary affiliation. This emphasis on identity suggests that interventions targeting a sense of purpose could uniformly enhance self-worth across educational tiers.

PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the present research is to study self-esteem among male and female primary and secondary school teachers, addressing a gap in localized empirical data from rural Indian contexts. This exploration is timely, given the evolving educational landscape in Gujarat, where teacher well-being directly impacts curriculum delivery and student outcomes. The problem may be stated as follows:

“A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SELF-ESTEEM BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE TEACHERS IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS”

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study and compare self-esteem between male and female teachers, examining mean differences and underlying contributors to inform gender-sensitive support strategies.
2. To study and compare self-esteem between primary and secondary school teachers, assessing whether task variations at different levels yield discernible self-esteem divergences.

These objectives provide clear directional anchors, ensuring the study's focus remains sharp and actionable.

HYPOTHESES

Ho1. There will be no significant difference between male and female teachers with regard to self-esteem

Ho2. There will be no significant difference between primary and secondary school teachers with regard to self-esteem

METHODOLOGY

Sr. No	Name of Variable	Nature of Variable	Level	Name of Level
1	Gender	Independent	2	Male, Female
2	School Level	Independent	2	Primary, Secondary
3	Self-Esteem	Dependent	1	RSES Total Score

SAMPLE DESIGN

The sample of the present research consisted of 60 teachers from Ahmedabad, Gujarat. It included 30 male and 30 female teachers, ensuring gender parity to mitigate sampling bias. Both were equally divided between primary and secondary schools (15 males and 15 females at each level), creating balanced subgroups for comparative analysis. The selection was done randomly from public and private schools, employing stratified random sampling to enhance representativeness and generalizability within the locale. This approach minimized selection artifacts, promoting the validity of subsequent inferences.

RESEARCH TOOL

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) developed by Rosenberg (1965) was used, a cornerstone instrument in self-esteem research prized for its psychometric soundness. It has 10 items, each phrased to gauge agreement with statements like "I feel that I am a person of worth" on a spectrum from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Responses are recorded on a 4-point Likert scale, with reverse scoring for negatively worded items to maintain consistency. Scores range from 10 to 40, where scores below 15 indicate low self-esteem, 15-25 suggest normal levels, and above 25 denote high self-esteem. Higher scores show higher self-esteem, providing a unidimensional measure that captures global self-worth efficiently. Reliability reported is 0.88, with Cronbach's alpha consistently high across diverse populations, affirming its internal consistency. Validity is supported by correlations with related constructs like depression and anxiety scales, making it apt for this study's objectives.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The scale was administered individually in quiet school settings to ensure focused responses and minimize distractions. Standard instructions were given, explaining the purpose, anonymity, and voluntary nature to build trust. Consent was obtained verbally and in writing, adhering to ethical standards that prioritize participant autonomy. Data were collected with permission and ethical approval from institutional review bodies, spanning a two-month period to accommodate schedules. This meticulous process yielded complete datasets, ready for analysis without missing values.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Scoring was done as per manual, summing item responses after reversing appropriate items for accuracy. Independent samples t-tests were used, assuming normality and equal variances as verified by Levene's test. Analysis was carried out using SPSS software, version 25, which enabled descriptive statistics, inferential tests, and effect size calculations like Cohen's d for deeper interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Results of t-Test for Gender with respect to Self-Esteem

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t value	p value
Male	30	29.10	3.20	3.00	0.004*
Female	30	31.50	3.00		

*Significant at 0.05 level

In Table 1, the mean score of male teachers is 29.10 and the mean score of female teachers is 31.50, reflecting a moderate yet meaningful gap in self-reported worth. The t-value is 3.00, which is significant at the 0.05 level ($p = 0.004$), with an effect size of approximately 0.47 indicating small-to-medium practical importance. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 stating “There will be no significant difference between male and female teachers with regards to self-esteem” is rejected. The result shows that female teachers have higher self-esteem than male teachers, possibly due to the profession's relational demands favoring interpersonal strengths often associated with women. This disparity could stem from cultural reinforcements where female educators receive more affirmation for emotional labor, enhancing their self-view.

Table 2: Results of t-Test for School Level with respect to Self-Esteem

School Level	N	Mean	SD	t value	p value
Primary	30	30.40	3.30	0.36	0.720
Secondary	30	30.70	3.10		

*NS = Not Significant

In Table 2, the mean score of primary teachers is 30.40 and the mean score of secondary teachers is 30.70, a negligible difference that aligns with expectations of uniformity. The t-value is 0.36, which is not significant at the 0.05 level ($p = 0.720$), with a trivial effect size near zero. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 stating “There will be no significant difference between primary and secondary school teachers with regards to self-esteem” is accepted. The result shows that there is no significant difference between primary and secondary teachers, reinforcing the idea that self-esteem in teaching is bolstered more by shared professional ethos than by level-specific challenges.

Discussion of Findings

The results show that female teachers have higher self-esteem than male teachers, a pattern that invites reflection on gender dynamics within Indian educational systems. This finding is supported by earlier research which reported similar gender differences (Kling et al., 1999; Yu, Nickerson, & Carey, 2022), where meta-analytic and domain-specific studies highlight women's relational advantages in caregiving professions. In the Gujarat context, cultural narratives emphasizing female nurturing may amplify this, providing daily validations that elevate self-esteem. However, this gender gap also raises concerns about male teachers' potential isolation, suggesting a need for inclusive support programs that affirm diverse contributions.

No significant difference was found between primary and secondary school teachers, affirming the profession's unifying psychological landscape. This finding supports Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017), who reported that professional identity is more important than teaching level, with self-efficacy emerging as a cross-cutting buffer against stressors. Primary teachers' focus on foundational engagement and secondary teachers' emphasis on specialized instruction appear to yield comparable self-worth outcomes, possibly due to equivalent opportunities for mastery and impact. Yet, this equivalence might mask subtler variances, warranting future qualitative explorations into nuanced experiences.

The small sample suggests that results should be interpreted with caution, as regional specificity limits broader applicability. Nonetheless, these insights advocate for holistic teacher development initiatives, integrating self-esteem enhancement through workshops on relational skills and identity building. Limitations include the cross-sectional design, which precludes causality, and self-report

reliance, prone to social desirability. Future research could incorporate longitudinal tracking or mixed-methods approaches to deepen understanding. Ultimately, fostering equitable self-esteem promises not only healthier educators but also enriched learning environments for generations to come.

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