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Assessment of self-esteem of street children

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the self-esteem of street children living on street. Self-esteem may be defined simply as favorable or unfavorable attitude towards self. In today's life self-esteem has been viewed as an important tool to face the competitive life. The study was conducted in some selected areas of Lucknow city. All the street children in the age group of 5-16 from various places were selected. Self-esteem was taken as dependent variable. Self-esteem was assessed using Rosenberg's Self –Esteem Scale (RSES). Independent variables considered under the study were age, gender, category of children and parent presence. The data was analyzed by t-test and one way ANOVA. The findings of the present research revealed low self-esteem among street children. Results revealed that through non-significant differences were obtained in self-esteem, comparison of mean scores revealed that street children in the age group of 14-16 had better self-esteem in comparison to the street children in the age group of 5-7 years. The study indicates that development of positive self-esteem play important role in the life of street children.

Keywords: Street children, self-esteem, gender, parent presence, family

Introduction

Self-esteem may be defined simply as favorable or unfavorable attitude towards self. Generally, self-esteem refers to an individual's overall positive or negative assessment of the self. Self-esteem as the extent to which we approve of and respect ourselves. It's our personal assessment of our own worth, and may not reflect our actual talents and abilities. It's strictly our opinion, how we feel about ourselves. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs about oneself, Self-esteem is attractive as a social psychological construct because researchers have conceptualized it as a powerful forecaster of certain outcomes, such as educational achievement, happiness, satisfaction in marriage and interaction and criminal behavior. People are often described as having either high self esteem, meaning they think very well of the oneself and their abilities. People with low self esteem meaning they are filled with doubts and criticisms about themselves and their abilities. Reasoner (2005) has defined self esteem as the experience of capable of meeting life challenges and being worthy of happiness. In today's life, self esteem has been viewed as a vital means to face the competitive life. This paper will examine how the self-esteem of street children is important and distinctly differ across various demographic variables. It is estimated that there are tens of millions of street children throughout the world. Damaged self-esteem is mainly due to lack of freedom that restricts the opportunity for children to lead a healthy childhood with prospective, prosperous future. Research shows positive self-esteem is critical to a healthy childhood development. It protects children and adolescents from intellectual distress and unhappiness, and enables them to manage adequately with complicated and stressful life situations. Poverty is a prominent factor to why children are driven to live on the street and leads to many of the damaging experiences that are harmful to street children's self-esteem. Low self-esteem, in return, should be considered an unfree Dom and leads to adverse economic prospects in the future. This suggests a cyclical pattern; low self-esteem is a result of poverty, but it also leads to continued poverty. Existing research also shows low self-esteem leads to poor physical and mental health, along with poor economic prospects and many other adverse consequences. Low self-esteem is a lack of freedom because it interferes with street children's opportunities to choose how to live, it makes it difficult for them to cope with difficult situations they face and it reduces their chance of attaining other freedom.

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If street children do suffer from low self-esteem, it could be a barrier for them to reintegrate into being a productive member of society. It could impede on opportunities to achieve potential or feasible capabilities. If street children have low self-esteem, and resources are administered to rebuild this self-esteem, research suggests that children will have an increased likelihood of leading a healthy and happy life, and contributing to the economy.

Several authors have contended experiencing mental, physical or sexual abuse can be very damaging to a child or adolescent's self-esteem. Self-esteem is influenced by the inconsistency between one's desired self and one existing self. Self-esteem is how we see ourselves or who we are, while self-esteem is how we like what we see (Lopez-Justica, 2001). The word esteem is derivative from the Latin word "aestimare" which means "to estimate or appraise self-esteem thus, refers to our positive and negative assessment of ourselves (Coopersmith, 1967). For Blescovich and Tomakia (1999), self-esteem is an individual's sense of his or her worth or value, or the level to which a person's values appreciate, approve of, prizes or likes him or herself. A study comparing physically abused children with non-abused children found the children who experienced abuse reported more depressive symptoms, heightened externality, lower self-esteem, and greater hopelessness about the future (Allen, 1989). In addition to exploring experiences that damage self-esteem, researchers have linked low self-esteem to negative behavior and poor mental health. Three separate studies concluded that there was a strong negative correlation between self-esteem and both aggressive behavior and Delinquency (Donnellan, 2005). It is well documented, self-esteem is related to depression, and there is robust support that low self-esteem contributes to depression (Orth, 2014). Furthermore, researchers have shown depression negatively impacts development and ability to maintain healthy relationships (Bhatia, 2007). Not only does low self-esteem negatively impact mental health, but research has also tied it to having poorer physical health (Trzesniewski, 2006) [7]. Alternative studies show individuals prone to violence do share certain common characteristics, including witnessing violence during childhood, low self-esteem, and little social or family support (Miller, 1998) All the feelings, beliefs and values associated with "I" or "me" compose self esteem which refers to the evaluative and affective aspect of the self to how good or bad we feel about ourselves. There are several key factors which are believed to have a significant influence on an individual's amount of self-esteem. Personality traits which one inherits from parents or grandparents will play a part in the manner in which events or circumstances are interpreted thus impacting upon self-esteem.

One of the greatest factors affecting self-esteem is one's experiences encountered in childhood. From an early age children are strongly influenced by those caring for them and if those people were overly critical and judgmental it is easy to see how this would cause one to feel inferior, rejected or worthless. Other factors impacting upon self-esteem include painful events or experiences such as bereavement, divorce, serious illness or bullying. Factors impacting the child's self esteem particularly in adolescents can lead to less mature behavior and the school performance as means of defense against this condition. Several authors have contended experiencing mental, physical or sexual abuse can be very damaging to a child or adolescent's self-esteem. The results of this study were in agreement with a previous study that found physically abused children to have significantly lower self-

esteem and greater depression than non-abused children (Kazdin, 1985). In a review of existing research on sexually abused children, evidence showed sexually abused children have poorer self-esteem than non abused children (Kendall-Tackett, 1993) [4].

Material and methods

The study was planned to investigate assessment of self esteem of children living on street. As per objectives, the study was conducted in some selected areas of Lucknow city. For the present research, non probability sampling technique was adopted to select street children as a sample. Snowball sampling technique was adopted and the sample was inclusive of children from railway station, bus depots, slum area, market place, and temple. For the proposed study, 80 street children in the age group of 5-16, from various places were selected. 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 in two types the dependent and independent variables. The dependent variable is the factor that is measured to determine the effect of independent variables. Self esteem was taken as dependent variable. Self esteem was assessed by Rosenberg's Self esteem Scale (RSES). A 20-item scale to measure participant's self-esteem at a given point in time was used. The 20 items are subdivided in to 3 components of self-esteem performance self-esteem, social self-esteem and appearance self-esteem. All items are answered using a 5-point scale not at all, a little bit, somewhat, very much, extremely. Items 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17,18,19,20 are reverse scored. An independent variable is a variable presumed to affect or influence other variables. Independent variable includes age, gender, parent's presence and category of street children.

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Self esteem among street children across gender

Variable	Gender				T value	P value
	Boys		Girls			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	.195	.660
Self-esteem	61.133	5.11	60.17	6.01		

It is evident from the data presented in the table above that even though no significant differences were found in self esteem among boys and girls, from mean scores, it can be noted that the self esteem of boys is higher than girls. This may be due to the reason that girls may be prone to various kinds of abuses lowering their self esteem.

Table 2: Self-esteem among street children across age

variables		Age		T value	P value
		Mean	SD		
Self esteem	5-7	56.50	4.53	3.27**	.026
	8-10	60.11	5.39		
	11-13	60.45	5.34		
	14-16	63.09	5.35		
	Total	60.71	5.51		

Highly significant differences in the self esteem across various age groups is evident from the data presented in the table 2. It can be portrayed from the data that as the age increased, the self esteem also was found to be increased. Almost similar pattern of self esteem was found in the children in the age group of 8-10 years and 11-13 years. Increase of self esteem with age indicates influences of

enhanced coverage to face the society and other related factors.

Table 3: Self-esteem among street children and Parent's presence

Variable	Parent presence		T value	P value
	Mean	SD		
Yes	61.01	5.20	2.79*	.098
No	59.7	5.46		
Total	120.71	10.66		

A significant difference in the mean values is evident due to presence of parents. Children living with parents protected higher self esteem in comparison to children who do not have parents. This may be due to the protection provided by the parents.

Table 4: Self-esteem among street children across category of children

Variable	Self esteem		T value	P value
	Mean	SD		
Category of children			.580	.678
Slum area	59.91	5.27		
Railway station	62.33	6.020		
Bus station	61.83	4.62		
Street/roadside	60.66	5.71		
Temple	60.00	7.64		
Total	60.71	5.51		

The study also focused to dwell upon the differences in the self esteem among street children living in various places. Though no significant differences were found due to place of stay, it can be noted that children living in railway stations has higher self-esteem and children living in temple and road sides have lower self esteem.

Conclusion

Though available data on street children is limited, many sources agree that street children face abuse, lack of family ties, poverty and lack of basic human needs. Existing data has shown these experiences can be very damaging to a child's self-esteem. Research has explored that the self esteem of boys is higher than girls. It can be noted that as the age increased the self esteem also was found to be increased. The study indicates that development of positive self esteem play important role in the life of street children

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