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## Self-esteem among tribal adolescents

Anna Treesa Benoy<sup>1</sup>, Justine Joseph<sup>2</sup>

1 Student, Department of Social Work, St. Joseph's College Moolamattam, Kerala, India

2 Assistant Professor in Psychology, St. Joseph's College, Moolamattam, Kerala, India

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### Abstract

Healthy self-esteem is important to be successful and happy throughout one's life. The aim of this study was to measure the self-esteem of tribal adolescents in Devikulam, Idukki district. The size of the sample was 201 adolescents (Tribal N=101 and general N=100) selected by using simple random sampling method. The self-esteem scale of Immanuel Thomas and Sam Sandra Raj (1985) was used to collect the data. Data was analysed by using SPSS23. Study revealed that tribal adolescents had higher level of self-esteem. The self-esteem is lower among general girls and it is higher among tribal boys.

**Keywords:** tribal adolescents, self-esteem, girls and boys

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### Introduction

Self-esteem is defined as the overall evaluation of oneself in a positive or negative way (Hughes & Rawles, 2005) <sup>[10]</sup>. Self-esteem refers to how much a person likes himself or herself. Self-esteem can lead to better health and social behavior and that poor self-esteem is associated with a broad range of mental disorders and social problems (Mann, Hosman, Schaalma & Vries, 2004) <sup>[12]</sup>. It is one of the key factors in determining a child's behavior. Harter (1990) stated that one third to one half of the adolescents struggle in the early adolescence due to low self-esteem. According to Erol and Orth (2011) <sup>[5]</sup> low self-esteem is a risk factor for negative outcomes in life domains of youngsters. Various mental disorders such as depression, anxiety and learning problems, difficulties in dealing with failures, losses and other setbacks trigger from low self-esteem. Self-esteem of adolescents is often affected by the physical and hormonal changes they experience, especially during puberty. Teens undergo major changes in their lives and their self-esteem can often become fragile.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescents as those people between 10 and 19 years of age. Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to legal adulthood and it seems as problematic period. Adolescents have varying levels of self-esteem, which appears to be influenced by such factors as gender, ethnicity, and social class. Self-esteem is related to school performance and delinquency. While it can be normal for a teenager to lack confidence at times, people with self-esteem issues normally view themselves differently to how others view them. Low self-esteem can be particularly hard for adolescents especially when they're doing things like starting high school or work, and forming new friendships and relationships. When someone has low self-esteem they tend to

avoid situations where they think there's risk of failure, embarrassment or making mistakes. These can involve school work, making friends, and trying new activities, which are all important parts of a healthy teenage life. If the low self-esteem is not identified and treated, then it can lead to problems such as relationship troubles or difficulty making friends, negative moods such as feeling sad, anxious, ashamed or angry, low motivation, poor body image, earlier sexual activity, drinking alcohol and or taking drugs to feel better. Adolescents have varying levels of self-esteem, which appears to be influenced by such factors as gender, ethnicity, and social class. It can also vary within an individual. An adolescent may have different levels of self-esteem in different domains such as social, scholastics, athletics, appearance, and general conduct and actions. Satisfaction with physical appearance is a large component of self-esteem, and adolescent girls have greater dissatisfaction with physical appearance than do boys (Harter, 1999).

For instance, the study of Hirsch and DuBois (1991) <sup>[9]</sup> have found that one-third to one-half of adolescents struggle with low self-esteem, especially in early adolescence. The results of low self-esteem can be temporary, but in serious cases can lead to various problems including depression, anorexia nervosa, delinquency, self-inflicted injuries and even suicide. Self-esteem is related to school performance and delinquency. In turn, their learning and development will be productive and will set them up for a healthy and positive future.

### Tribal adolescents

Tribals are one of the most exploited populations in Indian society. The isolation has kept them out of mainstream and made them easy prey to exploitation. (Ahmed & Haque, 2007). Lack of education, deprivation of need fulfilment and poverty may create

frustrations among tribal adolescents. Malnutrition is one malaise afflicting the tribal children. Poverty, low literacy, unsafe drinking water, poor environment, lack of sanitation, lack of basic health services as well as traditional beliefs and customs add to malnutrition among tribal children. Further, the tribal children are subject to acculturation pressures that do not exist for other populations, which create unique problems during their transition to adulthood (Adams, Kuhn & Rhodes, 2006) <sup>[1]</sup>. The study of Yadav, Parsekar, Prabhu and Patil (2013) <sup>[19]</sup> found that more than two third of the tribal adolescents had low self-esteem. There are a huge number of factors which may likely to contribute to the self-esteem of tribal adolescents.

Even in the sphere of education, the status of tribal adolescents is far from satisfactory. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) is taken to bolster the claim for progress made in expanding school education in India. A student enrolment in education stream is still a problem. But enrolment is a very unreliable basis for assessing the degree of access to education (Dubey, 2009) <sup>[18]</sup>; the important figures are absenteeism and drop-outs. In addition to above factors, child marriage is one of the crucial problems because it has an impact on children in a negative manner. Often the adolescents engaged in an infatuated relationship with a guy either from their own community or from outside. Later many of them could not return to the educational field because they seek a comfort zone than school setting in their home environment. Education has an imperative effect in children as it enables in every aspects of life. Early marriage is commonplace among tribals and there is no community restrictions. It is found that most of tribal girls belong to low socio-economic status with various physical and psychosocial problems. Due to the lack of information related to proper age of marriage and childbirth and related problems, they were allowed freedom to choose their life. A wide range of issues and concerns face tribal adolescents in India, including nutritional deficiencies, reproductive health problems, and mental and physical stress-related problems. Stress often results in the abuse of tobacco and other habit-forming drugs.

Moreover new problems arise from technological changes, globalization of media and access to internet. The problems and challenges of tribal adolescents varies according to the socio-economic, cultural and educational background of their families. Consequently it leads to low self-esteem in children. Problems include growing up, dissemination of required knowledge during adolescence, educational problems of scholastic and non-scholastic issues, cultural, social and religious rigidity existing among communities, problems of social exclusion and inability to live with mainstream society etc. affect the adolescents. Although adolescents may be well aware of the influence of their immediate environment that is, their families, peers and neighbourhood, they are also influenced to a considerable extent by their more inclusive environment, including their culture.

On the other hand, Government provides a number of facilities in order to cope with the national integration for the tribal people. The Central and state government provide different type of schemes and policies for this weaker section. All those schemes helped a lot in the development of tribal community. It helped to improve the family environment, economic conditions and bring infrastructure as well as technological improvements. Policy analyst and educationists have been trying to recognise tribal

culture, language, cognitive strength, curriculum and inherent learning ability of the tribal children. They believed the policies and programs could revamp the tribal adolescents in the country. Under the broad strategy of tribal sub-plan a number of schemes have been introduced from time to time with a view to uplift the condition. Broadly the schemes fall under two categories economic and social. Social development has been pursued along two lines – education and health – which take up the issue of children. For promotion of education, in addition to introduction of schools at various levels, several schemes have been worked out to give a boost to education and overall development among tribal children. These include the establishment of Ashram Schools, Ekalavya Model Residential Schools, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, pre-matric scholarships and vocational training centres. In the sphere of health, emphasis has been laid on extending and improving health infrastructure such as FHC, CHC, etc. as well as prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases. Many of the schemes under health and education exclusively deal with children's issues. These includes Matrutva Anudan Yojana, Pada Volunteer Scheme, Mobile Medical Squad, Water Quality Monitoring etc. It resulted insignificant changes among tribal adolescents.

The scenario may be changed during this covid-19 pandemic situation. Since techno logical advancement, usage of smart phones, online classes became widespread among adolescents, it may be resulting some changes in their self-esteem and they may face some connectivity and power issues during online classes. All these challenges also confronted by the general adolescents and all the adolescents treated alike. The data was collected prior to reporting any covid-19 cases in India and the study aimed to examine the level of self-esteem among tribal adolescents. So present study may reflect the self-esteem of tribal adolescents prior to covid-19 pandemic and the study entitled as the same. The researcher hoped that the study may be a reference for the policy makers to take particular steps.

### Objectives

- To find out whether there is any difference in self-esteem among tribal and general adolescents.
- To find out whether there is any gender differences in self-esteem among adolescents.

### Hypotheses

- There will be a significant difference in self-esteem among tribal adolescents and general adolescents.
- There will be a significant gender difference in self-esteem among adolescents.

### Method

In this study researcher use descriptive research design. The sample consisted of 101 tribal and 100 general adolescents residing in Idukki district. The researcher made a list of all schools in Idukki district having both tribal and general students and then shortlisted them by using simple random sampling. The data was collected in the period of November to December 2019, prior to reporting any covid-19 cases from India.

### Instruments

1. Demographic Data Sheet: It is prepared by the researcher to collect personal details of respondents.

2. Self-Esteem Inventory (Immanuel Thomas & Sam Sandra Raj, 1985): The inventory was developed by Immanuel Thomas and Sam Sandra Raj (1985) [11] of Kerala University. It was constructed as self-reporting method. The split half reliability coefficient of the test is calculated to be 0.95 after correlation using the Spearman- Brown formula and the test retest reliability is 0.90. Both these coefficient are at the 0.01 levels. In addition to this, validity was determined empirically with the help of self-esteem scores obtained by means of teacher rating technique. The correlation coefficient (0.41) obtained was significant at the 0.01 level. The inventory thus can be considered as a valid test for measuring self-esteem.

**Results and discussion**

**Table 1:** Distribution of sample on the basis of their gender

Sex	General	Tribal	Total
Girls	66	71	137 (68.16%)
Boys	34	30	64 (31.84%)
Total	100	101	201

As per the above table, the majority of the respondents were girls (N=137) and it is 61.16 percentage of the total sample. The number of girls from general and tribal community was 66 and 71 respectively. Remaining 31.84 percentage of sample were boys (N=34 and tribal N=30).

**Table 2:** The mean, SD and corresponding 't' value obtained by tribal and general adolescents

Variables	Mean of general (N=100)	SD	Mean of tribal (N=101)	SD	't' value
Self esteem	57.96	8.70	65.49	6.55	6.94**

\*\*Significant at 0.01 level

As per the table, there is a significant difference in self-esteem of tribal and general adolescents. The mean of tribal adolescents is greater than the mean of general adolescents in self-esteem which means that self-esteem is higher among tribal adolescents. This may be because of the government is now taking initiatives to bringing these minority groups into the mainstream. They were provided with all the material facilities such as telecommunication, infrastructure and almost everything which they needed from the part of government. Since education determines their prosperity, success and security in life, it is greatly considered with a number of recommendations. Government planners consider education as indispensable for helping tribal students cope with national integration. The Union and the state governments have spent considerable sums of money for their education. Considering all the disparities between tribal and non-tribal students many policies developed specially for tribals which have focused on education and the basic amenities. It includes post-metric scholarship schemes, book banks, up gradation of merit, scheme for establishing ashram schools in tribal sub-plan area etc. Additionally, priority will be accorded to opening primary schools in tribal areas, providing them different opportunities, ashram schools or residential schools will be established in a large scale in tribal areas, incentive schemes will be formulated for tribal people,

keeping in view their special needs and life style (State council of educational research and training, SCERT, 2016)

On the other hand, today tribal are treated equally as that of other students so that they do not have the feeling of being as a different group. So they became free from the feeling of inferiority because society also considering them and possess an ability to perceive everything in the right perspective. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has allocated a significant portion of its budgetary resources for the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population. Health care delivery is managed through specific programmes aimed at providing accessible and affordable healthcare including NRHM, district mental health programs etc. National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) seeks to provide accessible, affordable and quality health care to the rural population, especially the vulnerable groups (Annual Report 2017-2018). There is also considerable changes happened in the case of wage system, transportation etc. It may helped to improve the family environment, economic conditions and bring infrastructure as well as technological improvements. These all may contributed to the economic upliftment and overall development of the tribal category. Consequently all these factors may be contributed to the self-esteem of tribal adolescents.

Yadav, Prabhu, Patel and Parsekar (2013) [19] found that there is a significant difference in self-esteem between tribal and non-tribal students. Ghosh (2013) [7] found that significant differences between the tribal and non-tribal students on the level of self-esteem, tribal students possess lower level of self-esteem than general students, present findings contradicted with their findings.

**Table 3:** ANOVA of self-esteem with respect to gender

Variable		Sum of squares	Df	Mean of squares	F
Self-esteem	Between the groups	2918.18	3	972.72	16.34**
	Within the groups	11723.87	197	59.512	
	Total	14642.06	200		

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level

The table revealed that the calculated 'F' value of self-esteem is 16.34 which is greater than the table value and it is statistically significant at 0.01 level. Gender significantly influencing upon self-esteem.

**Result of group mean analysis given below;**

**Table 4:** Post hoc table of self-esteem

Gender	N	Subset for alpha=0.05	
		General	Tribal
General girls	66	57.42	
General boys	34	59	
Tribal girls	71		65.29
Tribal boys	30		65.96
Sig		0.342	0.686

As per the table, tribal girls and boys kept a difference in self-esteem with general girls and boys. The self-esteem is lower among general girls and it is higher among tribal boys. Tribal category is treated as a privileged group as they get many upsides and reservations in every sphere of government and non-government sectors. They were provided with immense

opportunities like training sessions, life skill development, career guidance, internships etc. They do not want to get anxious about their future since they are provided with every facilities and they becomes confident in their life. Similarly, tribal girls get special consideration during their menstrual period, they will be in 'valaymapurakal' where they were kept during this period and also it leads to highlight their famine quality. On the other hand, general category are in the same phase as there is no upliftment in any area neither economic nor social. They are treated normally without any special benefits.

The study of Prajina and Preamsingh (2014) <sup>[13]</sup> revealed that females have higher level of self-esteem than males and age is not an influencing factor. A study of tribal adolescents conducted by Samhitha, Pettugani, Devi and Rani (2021) <sup>[15]</sup>, found that girls have comparatively higher self-esteem than that of boys. In another study, revealed there was statistically significant difference in self-esteem between tribal and non-tribal students. Samhitha and Sreedevi (2020) found that tribal girls have higher self-esteem than tribal boys. Jahan (2016) found that gender has an impact on self-concept. The above studies supported the present findings. Whereas the study of Rajan, Gupta and Gujar (2021) <sup>[14]</sup> found that the adolescent girls with tribal ethnicity found to have low self-esteem and wellbeing compared to adolescent girls with non-tribal ethnicity. Srivastava, Kumar, Kiran (2015) <sup>[16, 17]</sup> reported that female adolescents show lower self-esteem as compared to their male counterparts. Ghosh (2015) found that girls possess poorer amount of self-concept than boys. All of the supported and contradicted proved that gender significantly influencing the self-esteem of adolescents. Present study also adhere to the previous previous findings of the researchers.

### Conclusion

The result revealed that the self-esteem is higher among tribal boys and it is lower among general girls when compared to tribal girls. The community and sex differences influencing the self-esteem. This study may be helpful for the students and faculties of social work, social science, developmental studies, psychology etc.

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