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Self-concept and academic achievement of rural school going children engaged in agricultural activities : A correlational study

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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken on rural school going children engaged in agricultural labour with the objectives to determine the self-concept of the children and find out the relationship of self-concept with the academic achievement of the children. The sample consisted of 160 children (both boys and girls) in the age range of 10-14 years. The tools used to collect the data were; Personal Information Sheet to record the demographic profile of the children, a self-concept inventory developed by Saraswat (1992) to determine the self-concept of the children and the information relating to academic achievement was obtained from school records. The results revealed that self-concept of girls was found to be higher as compared to the boys and it was found to be positively correlated with the academic achievement. The total self-concept of both boys and girls was found to be positively correlated with academic achievement. The correlation was found to be highly positively significant for both girls (r-value= 0.71; P<0.01) and boys (r-value= 0.68; P<0.01). Highly significant differences were observed among girls and boys on various dimensions of self concept such as social, educational, moral and intellectual.

INTRODUCTION

Self-concept is a belief systems, it is the multi-faceted, multi-level cognitive and evaluation of oneself and their relationship with his surroundings. It's a core part of personality (Xiaofeng and Chengzong, 2010). According to the Clerk *et al.* (2000) self concept has social competence ,since it influence how the person feels, how he or she thinks, learns, values himself or herself relates to others, how he or she behaves. According to the Tajfel and Turner (1986) Academic performance determine self-concept. Academic experience of success or failure significantly affect the children's self-concept and self-image than *vice versa*, this being explained by the role of evaluation by significant others, or by the theory of social comparison.

Self- concept " is the set of perceptions or reference points that the subject has about himself the set of characteristics, attributes, qualities and deficiencies, capacities and limits, value of relationships that the subjects know to be descriptive of himself and which he perceives as data concerning his identity" (Hamacheck, 1981, quoted by Marchargo, 1991). The task of defining oneself in adolescence may be very difficult because there

are many influences on identity formation during this period of transition (Carter and Hall, 1993 and Mac Iver and Epstein, 1993). Child labour affects the social development of children, as they do not spend time with family and friends which prevent them to build positive relationship and hence effect emotional development (Blogger and Gamble, 2011).

Child labour has been reported to have significant impact on child's development and achievement. According to Bezerra *et al*. (2009) children and adolescents who do not work along with studies have better school performance than adolescents who work. It has been reported that upto two hours of work per day does not have a statistically significant effect on the school performance, but additional hours decrease student's achievement. Moreover differences in work conditions also affect school performance. Child labour experience has been found to be having significant negative impact on their education (Beegle *et al.,* 2009).

Low academic achievement impairs the childs self-confidence, self-concept and self-esteem. The relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement is bidirectional; causation flows in both the directions. Self-esteem and academic achievement influence each other. Hence, it is important to create a nurturing or positive environment which helps to improve the self-esteem of children (Malhi, 2010). Crawford (2013) found out that self-concept influence the child's academic performance; however, the level of effort exerted by children in learning to a large extent contributes significantly to children' self-concept in boosting their academic performance. Craven and Marsh (2008) stated that self-concept is crucial to maximize the human potential from early development to school achievement to physical and mental health and to overall well-being. According to Marsh (1987) self-concept had a direct effect on subsequent school performance beyond the effects of academic ability and prior school performance. Trzesniewski *et al.* (2006) found that children with low self-esteem had poorer mental and physical health, worse economic prospects, and higher levels of criminal behaviour during adulthood, compared with adolescents with high self-esteem. Saani *et al.* (2014) reported that self-concept is perceived positively by children; however, this self-concept does not directly predict children' academic performance. It does so only when children are able to exert some level of effort in learning what they have been taught. It is therefore recommended that teachers, parents, and indeed all stakeholders should see it as a duty to consider this self-concept of children since they influence the development of positive self-concept among children when dealing or interacting with them. Also, they must help, monitor and supervise children to have private time table for learning and to guide them in their day-to-day learning since such efforts boost children's academic performance significantly. According to Joshi and Srivastava (2009) boys would scored significantly higher on self-esteem as compared to girls and significant gender differences were found in academic achievement of both boys and girls. Girls were significantly higher on academic achievement as compared to boys. Aryana (2010) also suggested that high self-esteem is important factor and strengthens the prediction of academic achievement in students. It has been declared that high self-esteem can lead to high academic achievement. Hence, children need to grow in an environment that enables them to lead a life of autonomy and pride and enhance their, personality development (Murthy, 2007). Keeping in view the above facts, the present study was planned on rural school going children engaged in agricultural activities with the following objectives.

Objectives :

– To determine the gender differences in the self-concept of rural school going children engaged in agricultural activities.

– To find out the relationship of self-concept with their academic achievement.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Location:

The study was carried out on rural school going children (both boys and girls) engaged in agricultural activities in one block of Sangrur district.

Sample:

A sample comprising of 160 children (both boys and girls) in equal number (80 each ; 40 in the age group of 10-12 years (20 boys and 20 girls) and 40 in the age group 12-14 years (20 boys and 20 girls) was randomly selected from Government Senior Secondary Schools and Government High Schools existing in four villages *viz.,* Bakhora, Haryau, Kotla Lehla and Daska in the Sangrur

district.

Tools:

A Personal Information Sheet was used to record the demographic profile and a Self-concept Inventory developed by Saraswat (1992) was used to determine the self-concept of the children and the information relating to academic achievement was obtained from school records.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The results obtained from the present investigation as well as relevant discussion have been summarized under following heads :

Demographic profile of rural school going children:

All the children were from rural background and were enrolled in government school. Most of their parents were illiterate and working as a labourer. Maximum number of children belonged to nuclear families. Data further revealed that more than forty per cent (43.12%) of the families of the children had monthly income upto Rs. 7000 and more than twenty eight per cent (28.13%) had Rs. 7001- Rs. 8000 whereas rest of the families were having Rs. 8001 and even more monthly income.

Data presented in Table 1 reveal the gender differentials in self-concept between school going girls and boys engaged in agricultural activities. Self-concept of the children was based on the dimensions including physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual. Both boys and girls were found to have same level of total self-concept since their mean scores were at par. In the physical dimension of self-concept also mean scores of girls (mean scores=22.16) and boys (mean scores=20.86) were almost similar and statistically also non-significant differences were calculated between girls and boys.

In the social dimension of self-concept, the girls scored high (mean scores= 24.08) in comparison to boys (mean scores=18.35) and there were statistically highly significant differences (t-value=4.45; P<0.01) in the social self-concept of boys and girls. Similarly, on temperamental dimension the girls scored high (mean scores=22.83) as compared to boys (mean scores= 19.49) and there were statistically significant differences between boys and girls (t-value=2.45; P<0.05). Therefore, girls had better physical and social self-concept than boys. In educational dimension, boys got the higher (mean scores= 24.15) as compared to girls (mean scores=18.21) and there were statistically highly significant differences (t-value=4.66; P<0.01).

In intellectual dimension, boys got higher (mean scores=23.61) as compared to girls (mean scores= 19.13) and statistically highly significant differences were found between boys and girls (t-value=3.38; P<0.01). In moral dimension, the mean scores of girls were higher (Mean scores= 23.55) in comparison to boys (mean scores=19.55) and there were also statistically significant differences between boys and girls (t-value=3.13; P<0.01) on the moral self-concept. Data revealed that the total mean scores of girls on the self-concept dimensions (mean scores=129.95) were higher in comparison to boys (mean scores=126.01) which showed that girls had good self-concept than the boys however, statistically there were non-significant differences. The findings are supported by Malhi (2010) who concluded that it is important to create a nurturing or positive environment which helps to improve the self-esteem and self-concept of children.

Data presented in Table 2 reveals the relationship of total self-concept of the respondents with their academic achievement. The total self-concept of both

Table 1: Gender differentials (Mean±SD) in dimensions of self-concept of school going children engaged in agricultural activities (n=160)

Self-concept (Dimensions)	Girls (n=80) Mean±SD	Boys (n=80) Mean±SD	t-value
Physical	22.16±10.83	20.86±5.29	0.96^{NS}
Social	24.08±10.66	18.35±4.35	4.45**
Temperamental	22.83±7.40	19.49±9.23	2.52*
Educational	18.21±10.45	24.15±4.53	4.66**
Moral	23.55±6.59	19.55±9.34	3.13**
Intellectual	19.13±9.41	23.61±7.22	3.38**
Total	129.95±13.08	126.01±13.06	1.91^{NS}

* and ** indicate significance of values at P<0.01 and P<0.05, respectively, NS=Non-significant

boys and girls were found to be positively correlated with academic achievement. Since, the r-value of girls (r-value= 0.71;P<0.01) and boys (r-value= 0.68;P<0.01) were found to be highly positively significant. These findings are supported with a study which revealed that it is vital to create a nurturing or positive environment which helps to enhance the self-concept of children (Malhi, 2010).

Data presented in Table 3 depicts the relationship of dimension of self-concept with academic achievement of school going children engaged in agricultural activities. The self-concept of children relating to various dimensions *viz.,* physical, social, temperamental, moral and intellectuals dimensions was found to be highly positively correlated with academic achievement. Since, the r-value for different dimensions physical, social and moral (r-value= 0.24; P<0.01), temperamental (r-value = 0.25; P<0.01) and Intellectual (r-value= 0.015; P<0.01) were found to be highly positively significant. However, the educational dimension of self-concept was found to be negatively correlated with academic achievement. Statistically also there was non-significant correlation of self–concept of children with academic achievement. Aryana (2010) also revealed that high self-concept is important factor and strengthen the prediction of academic achievement in students. High self-esteem can lead to high academic achievement.

Data presented in Table 4 depicts the relationship of various dimensions of self-concept with the academic achievement of boys and girls. Scores of girls on physical dimension of self-concept were found to be highly positively correlated with academic achievement. Statistically also there were highly significant correlation of self–concept boys (r-value =0.02; P<0.01) with their academic achievement whereas, scores of boys on physical dimension of self-concept were found to be positively correlated with academic achievement. Statistically there were non-significant correlation with

Table 2: Relationship of self-concept of the children with their academic achievement **(n=160)**

Variable	Girls (n=80)		Boys (n=80)	
	Mean±SD	r-value	Mean±SD	r-value
Self- concept	129.95±13.08	0.71**	126.01±13.06	0.68**
Academic achievement	4.03±0.72		3.88±0.84	

**indicates significance of value at P<0.01

Table 3: Dimension wise relationship of self-concept of the children with their academic achievement **(n=160)**

Self-concept (Dimensions)	No. of respondents (n=160) Mean±SD	Academic achievement Mean±SD	r-value
Physical	21.51±8.51	3.95±0.78	0.24**
Social	21.21±8.60		0.24**
Temperamental	21.15±8.50		0.25**
Educational	21.18±8.56		-0.06
Moral	21.55±8.30		0.24**
Intellectual	21.36±8.65		0.15**

** indicates significance of value at P<0.01

Table 4 : Dimension wise relationship of self-concept of the children with the academic achievement across gender **(n=160)**

Self-concept (Dimensions)	Girls (n=80) Mean±SD	r-value	Boys (n=80) Mean±SD	r- value
Physical	22.16±10.83	0.39**	20.86±5.29	0.02^{NS}
Social	24.08±10.66	0.20**	18.35±4.35	0.36**
Temperamental	22.83±7.40	0.19**	19.49±9.23	0.28**
Educational	18.21±10.45	-0.11	24.15±4.53	0.10^{NS}
Moral	23.55±6.59	-0.2	19.55±9.34	0.37**
Intellectual	19.13±9.41	0.28*	23.61±7.22	0.07^{NS}
Academic achievement	4.03±0.72		3.88±0.84	

* and ** indicate significance of values at P<0.05 and P<0.01, respectively NS=Non-significant

their academic achievement. Social and temperamental dimensions of self-concept were also found to be highly positively correlated with academic achievement of girls and boys.

The educational dimension of self-concept among girls was found to be negatively correlated with academic achievement. Statistically also there was negative correlation of self-concept girls (r-value = -0.11) with the academic achievement whereas, the educational dimension of self-concept among boys was found to be positively correlated with their academic achievement. Statistically there was non-significant correlation of self-concept boys with academic achievement. Similarly, in moral dimensions self-concept of the girls was negatively correlated with academic achievement (r-value =-0.2) whereas, boys academic achievement was highly significantly correlated with moral dimension (r-value=0.37; P<0.01). Scores of girls and boys on Intellectual dimension of self-concept were found to be positively correlated with academic achievement. Statistically also there was significant positive correlation of self-concept of girls (r-value= 0.28; P<0.05) and boys were non-significant relationship of intellectual dimension and with academic achievement. Glory and Etim (2013) also revealed that child labour is considered as work performed by children under 18 years of age which is exploitative, hazardous or inappropriate for their age, as well as detrimental to their schooling, social, mental, spiritual and moral development. Joshi and Srivastava (2009) Boys would score significant higher on self-esteem as compared to girls. Significant gender differences were found in academic achievement. Girls were significantly higher on academic achievement as compared to boys.

Conclusion :

Self-concept influence the children's academic achievement and performance in the class. The children nurtured in healthy and sound environment tend to develop a higher self-concept and self-esteem which go a long way in affecting the performance of children in various spheres. Hence, there is diar need that children be provided with a very nurturing and stimulating environment to develop their potentials. Hence, parents and teachers must be very sensitive while communicating with children and provide them enriched environment maximum levels

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