



SELF-ESTEEM OF DISABLED AND ABLED : A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The study was designed to compare the self-esteem of disabled and non-disabled persons of Tripura. Fifty disabled and fifty non-disabled persons were participated in the study. Self esteem Inventory was used to collect data from the participants. The results showed that disabled person possessed low self esteem (both personally perceived self esteem and socially perceived self esteem) than their normal counterparts. The findings revealed no significant difference among male and female disabled persons and among persons with locomotor and visual disability with regard to their self esteem which further indicated that disability negatively affects self esteem of an individual irrespective of gender and nature of disability.

Key words : Disability, personally perceived self esteem, socially perceived self esteem

Self Esteem : Self-esteem is a term used in psychology to reflect person's overall emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a judgment of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self. Self-esteem is also known as the evaluative dimension of the self that includes feelings of worthiness, pride and discouragement. In the mid-1960s, Morris Rosenberg and social-learning theorists defined self-esteem as a personal worth or worthiness. Nathaniel Branden in 1969 defined self-esteem as "the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and being worthy of happiness." According to Branden, self-esteem is the sum of self-confidence (a feeling of personal capacity) and self-respect (a feeling of personal worth). It exists as a consequence of the implicit judgment that every person has of their ability to face life's challenges, to understand and solve problems, and their right to achieve happiness, and be given respect. As a social psychological construct, self-esteem is attractive because researchers have conceptualized it as an influential predictor of relevant outcomes, such as academic achievement or exercise behavior. In addition, self-esteem has also been treated as an important outcome due to its close relation with psychological well-being (Marsh, 1989). Psychologists usually regard self-esteem as an enduring personality characteristic ("trait" self-esteem), though normal, short-term variations ("state" self-esteem) also exist. Synonyms or near-synonyms of self-esteem include: self-worth, self-regard, self-respect, and self-integrity.

Self esteem may be high or low. Individuals with high self-esteem firmly believe in certain values and principles and are ready to defend them even when finding opposition, feeling secure enough to modify them in the light of experience. They consider themselves equal in dignity to others, rather than inferior or superior, while accepting differences in certain talents, personal prestige or financial standing and can work toward finding solutions and voice discontent without belittling themselves or others when challenges arise. On the other hand persons with low self-esteem may show some of the following characteristics:

Intense self-criticism and dissatisfaction. Hypersensitivity to criticism with resentment against critics and feelings of being attacked. Chronic indecision and an exaggerated fear of mistakes. Neurotic guilt, dwelling on and/or exaggerating the magnitude of past mistakes. Floating hostility and general defen-

siveness and irritability without any proximate cause. Pessimism and a general negative outlook. Envy, invidiousness, or general resentment. Sees temporary setbacks as permanent, intolerable conditions.

Low self-esteem can result from various factors, including genetic factors, physical appearance or weight, body image, age, gender, mental health issues, socioeconomic status, peer pressure or bullying.

Self Esteem and Disability : Disability is defined as "disadvantage or deficiency, especially a physically or mental impairment that interferes with or prevents normal achievement in a particular area, or something that hinder or incapacitates". Disabled are not a homogenous group. There are different types of disabilities, with different requirements. Each one has problems, needs and help required are different from the other. The different forms of disability are:

i) Locomotor Disability : Locomotor disability is defined as the person's inability to execute distinctive activities associated with moving both himself and the objects, from place to place and such inability resulting from affliction of musculoskeletal and/ or nervous system. Some common conditions giving rise to locomotor disability could be poliomyelitis, cerebral palsy, autism, amputation, injuries of spine, head, soft tissues, fractures, muscular dystrophies etc.

ii) Visual Disability : Visual Disability or Blindness refers to a person's inability to see either fully or partially. A visually disabled person is known to be suffering from visual impairment. A person with low vision or poor eyesight is one who continues to have the problem even after going through medically approved corrective measures. This person with poor eyesight is still in a position to continue his tasks with appropriate assisted devices.

iii) Speech and Hearing Disability: Speech and Hearing Disability is referred to a condition wherein the person is incapable of speaking and hearing any sound.

iv) Learning Disability : It is a disorder, which affects the basic psychological processes of understanding written or spoken language. This disorder affects development of language, speech and reading and associated communication skills needed for social interaction. Conditions such as brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia are examples of learning disabilities.

v) Mental Retardation : Mental retardation is defined as a state of arrested or incomplete development of the mind, which is specially characterized by impairment of skills manifested during the development period which contribute to the overall level of intelligence, i.e., cognitive language, motor and social abilities. The level of mental retardation may be mild, moderate, severe or even profound.

vi) Multiple Disabilities : A combination of two or more disabilities in a person is defined as person with multiple disabilities.

Around 10% of the world's population, or 650 million people, live with a disability. They are the world's largest minority. Twenty percentages of world's poorest people are disabled and tend to be regarded in their own communities as the most disadvantages. Disability affects a person in different ways: it affects his/her health, social relationships with family, friends and neighbours and also his/her independence. A person's adjustment to a handicap that completely limits his/her freedom and security, and the feelings, understanding, attitudes, and behaviors that he/she develops in this regard are likely to have important effects on his/her personality development. Research showed that the type of handicap an individual suffers, the cause of the handicap, whether or not the individual has received sufficient medical treatment, special education, and rehabilitation, and his/her socio-demographic characteristics such as sex, education, marital status, job, age, income etc have an effect on his/her self-esteem.

People with disability find very difficult to fit them in environment and attain a psychological wellbeing. Physical disability can lead to frequent confusion, frustration, anxiety, anger and depression. Disabled people internalize negative messages received from peers and assume they are less significant and valued than others. Disability not only restricts functioning of the individual but also affects the self image of a person negatively. Generally when we receive recognition from others it increases our self-esteem and feelings of pride. On the contrary if others surrounding us perceive us inadequately it decreases our self image and we start evaluating ourselves negatively and hence our self-esteem becomes low.

Tarsuslu and Livanelioglu (2010) found that physical impairment was the strongest forecaster of individual disability and that sternness of disability was the strongest predictor of social functioning. Adults with disabilities are less likely to have social networks and friends, participate in recreational activities or date, attend college, hold a full-time job, live independently, and marry (Fuhrer, 1994; Ireys, Werthamer-Larsson, Kolodner, & Gross, 1994; Kokkonen, Saukkonen, Timonen, Serlo, & Kinnunen, 1991; Parmenter & Knox, 1991). These studies indicate that only 30 to 50 percent of adults with physical disabilities are engaged in paid employment and no more than 40 to 45 percent live apart from their parents. Thus, adults with physical disabilities face both social and economic disadvantage (Doyle, Moffatt, & Corlett, 1994; Hallum, 1995). Rose

(2008) described that there is positive relationship between Physical disability and depression or psychological distress. The study of Mar et al (2010) also found a significant relationship between disability and the loss of quality of life in both physical and mental dimensions.

Objectives : The aim of the present research was

To examine the self esteem of the disable person and to compare that with their normal counterparts.

To ascertain the impact of nature of disability and gender on the self esteem of the disabled.

Hypotheses : The following hypotheses were framed to fulfill the objectives of the study:

Disabled and able bodied persons will differ significantly with respect to their personally perceived self-esteem.

Disabled and able bodied persons will differ significantly with respect to their socially perceived self-esteem.

People with locomotor disability and visual disability will differ significantly with respect to their personally perceived self-esteem.

People with locomotor disability and visual disability will differ significantly with respect to their socially perceived self-esteem.

Male and female disable persons will differ significantly with respect to their personally perceived self-esteem.

Male and female disable persons will differ significantly with respect to their socially perceived self-esteem.

Research Design : The study was carried out among 100 participants - 50 disabled and 50 normal subjects (without any disability). Further, 50 disabled subjects (25 with locomotor disability and 25 with visual disability) were divided into 25 males and 25 females. In the same manner normal subjects (without any disability) were also divided into 25 male and 25 female subjects. Disabled persons were selected purposively from DDRC (District Disability Rehabilitation Centre), Agartala and the able bodied were also selected purposively from Agartala, town. Both the group were matched in terms of age, gender, education, religion, living areas and socio economic status.

In the present study Self-esteem Inventory developed by M.S.Prasad and G.P.Thakur (1989) was used for data collection. The inventory has two parts. Part one measures personally perceived self and part two measures socially perceived self. In the present study both the parts of this inventory were used. Each part of this inventory consists of 30 items. Of the thirty items, 17 are personally/socially desirable and 13 are personally/socially undesirable. Thus in total there are 60 statements in this inventory. There are 7 possible response to each statement/ item i.e. totally correct, correct to a large extent, partially correct, uncertain, partially wrong, wrong to a large extent and totally wrong. The maximum score of this inventory is 210 and minimum score is 30. Here low score indicates poor self esteem while high score indicates high self-esteem. With the help of this inventory data were collected in two phases. In the first phase, data were collected from the physically disable persons. Here at first permission was taken

from the authority of the DDRC and then tentative time schedule was developed. In the second phase data were collected from normal population. In case of physically disabled, data were collected through face to face interview technique while for the normal population self administered method was employed. After collecting the response from all the study subjects, at first all data sheets were checked thoroughly to find out any gaps or discrepancies in the response sheet. For data analysis, descriptive statistics i.e. mean and SD was computed and for testing the hypothesis inferential statistics i.e. t test was employed.

Results and Interpretation : Self-esteem refers to the way we see and think about ourselves. Self-esteem involves one's sense of worthiness, adequacy, and self-respect. An individual's self-esteem is influenced by his/her physical and mental characteristics. From table 1 it has evident that the Mean and SD scores of personally perceived self-esteem of the disabled were 68.04 and 31.17 respectively. On the contrary the Mean and SD scores of personally perceived self-esteem among normal people were 160.88 and 18.75 respectively. The 't' value (-18.06) showed significant difference between them at 0.01 level of significance. Hence the 1st hypothesis i.e. 'disabled and able bodied persons will differ significantly with respect to their personally perceived self-esteem' has been accepted. Persons with physical disability have low personally perceived self because they perceived themselves very feebly. They have profound self-criticism, dissatisfaction, chronic indecision and an exaggerated fear of mistakes. They don't believe in themselves and they are afraid to show their creativity because they will be ridiculed (Jones 2003). People with physical disabilities may not have the same opportunities of learning about themselves or others because of restricted social contact (mobility and access problems are probably the main reasons).

Table 1
Comparison of Personally Perceived Self esteem of Physically Disabled and Able bodied

Subjects	Mean	SD	t value	Level of significance
Disable Person (N=50)	68.04	31.17	-18.06	Significant at 0.01 level
Normal Person (N=50)	160.88	18.75		

Results in table 2 revealed that the socially perceived self esteem of disabled person is very low in comparison to their normal counterparts. The t value (-16.42) is significant at 0.01 level of significance and hence the 2nd hypothesis i.e. 'Disabled and able bodied persons will differ significantly with respect to their socially perceived self-esteem' has been accepted. Generally in our society disabled persons think that the society do not accept their disability and the able bodied behave with them vigorously. As a result they don't like to meet new people, they worry about how others will judge them. The disabled due to their physical limitation perceive themselves as incompetent and socially rejected and hence their socially perceived self esteem become low.

Table 2
Comparison of Socially Perceived Self-esteem of Physically Disabled and Able bodied

Subjects	Mean	SD	t value	Level of Significance
Disable Person (N= 50)	75.44	19.54	-16.42	Significant at 0.01 level
Normal Person (N= 50)	130.46	13.39		

From table 3 it has evident that the Mean value of Personally Perceived Self-esteem of persons with locomotor disability and visual disability were 72.24 and 63.84 respectively. This indicates that blind people have low self perception than their counterparts. However t value (1.49) did not reveal any significant difference between them. Hence the 3rd hypothesis 'People with locomotor disability and visual disability will differ significantly with respect to their personally perceived self-esteem' has been rejected. Hence it can be said that the nature of disability has no significant impact on the self esteem of the disabled.

Table 3
Comparison of Personally Perceived Self-esteem of Persons with Locomotor Disability and Visual Disability

Subjects	Mean	SD	t value	Level of Significance
Locomotor Disability (N= 25)	72.24	20.07	1.49	Insignificant at 0.05 level
Visual Disability (N= 25)	63.84	19.62		

The results depicted in table 4 showed that the Mean and SD values of socially perceived self-esteem of persons with locomotor disability and visual disability were 78.65 and 21.26 and 72.23 and 18.51 respectively. The 't' value (1.14) reveals no significant difference between the two groups in regard to their socially perceived self-esteem. Hence the 4th hypothesis i.e. 'People with locomotor disability and visual disability will differ significantly with respect to their socially perceived self-esteem' has been rejected. However from the mean score it is clearly evident that the persons with locomotor disability have better socially perceived self than the persons with visual disability.

Table 4
Comparison of Socially Perceived Self esteem of Persons with Locomotor Disability and Visual Disability

Subjects	Mean	SD	t value	Level of Significance
Locomotor Disability ((N=25)	78.65	21.26	1.14	Insignificant at 0.05 level
Visual Disability (N=25)	72.23	18.51		

From table 5 it has it has evident that the Mean and SD scores of personally perceived self-esteem among male persons with physical disability were 78.72 and 18.35 respectively. On the contrary the Mean and SD scores of socially perceived self-esteem among female persons with physical disability were 71.99 and 16.24 respectively. All though mean difference exists in between both the group of subjects however 't' value reveals no significant difference between them in regard to their socially perceived self-esteem. Hence the 6th hypothesis i.e., 'Male and female disable persons will differ significantly with respect to their socially perceived self-esteem' has been rejected. The study of Omolayo, B. (2009) also found no significant difference in the self-esteem male and female disabled persons. However on the basis of their mean scores it is said that the male subjects have more positive social perceived self-esteem in regard to their female counterparts. In a number of studies, females with physical disabilities have rated themselves as particularly low in social acceptance (Resnick & Hutton, 1987; King, Shultz, Steel, Gilpin, & Cathers, 1993), which may lead to social isolation and feelings of loneliness. The study of King et al. (1993) also revealed similar results. They found that females with disability have low perceived social acceptance and athletic competence. According to the feminist perspective, women's self-esteem may be based on participating in mutual relationships, caring for others, a sense that they can influence and be influenced by others, and the perception that they are really visible to others.

Table 5
Comparison of Personally Perceived Self-esteem
of Persons with Locomotor Disability and Visual Disability

Subjects	Mean	SD	t Value	Level of Significance
Male Disabled (N=25)	78.72	18.35	1.37	Insignificant at 0.05 level
Female Disable (N=25)	71.99	16.24		

From table 6 it has it has evident that the Mean score of socially perceived self-esteem of male disable persons were 67.04 which was lower than the mean score (69.84) of female disable persons. Females with physical disabilities sometimes have adequate self-esteem, contrary to popular opinion (Arnold & Chapman, 1992; Hallum, 1995). The reasons for this are many: (1) there are positive aspects to having a disability; (2) having a disability is only one aspect of a person's self; and (3) people use various psychological mechanisms (such as social comparison with others who are less well off) to maintain positive self-esteem (Arnold & Chapman, 1992). However the present study did not reveal any significant impact of gender on the personally perceived self-esteem as the 't' value (-0.62) is insignificant at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 6
Comparison of Personally Perceived Self-esteem of Male and Female Disable Person

Subjects	Mean	SD	t Value	Level of Significance
Male Disabled (N=25)	67.04	17.18	-0.62	Insignificant at 0.05 level
Female Disabled (N=25)	69.84	14.52		

Conclusion : On the whole it can be inferred that the disabled persons had low self-esteem (both personally perceived and socially perceived self-esteem) in comparison to the able bodied. Interestingly persons with locomotor disability and visual disability did not differ significantly with regard to their self-esteem. Again there is no significant impact of gender on the self-esteem of the disabled person.

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