

# Self-concept among Adolescent Girls

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## ABSTRACT

**Self-concept** is a collection of beliefs about oneself. It is how one perceives about his or her behavior, abilities and unique characteristics. Self-concept begins to develop in early childhood. This process continues throughout the lifespan. However, it is between early childhood and adolescence that self-concept experiences the most growth. The present study is an attempt to investigate the self-concept among adolescent girls. The objectives of the study are 1. to find the self-concept levels among adolescent girls. 2. to assess the difference among adolescent boys and girls in relation to the dimensions of self-concept. The study revealed that the adolescent girls, who are studying in government schools of Hyderabad have above average and high level of self-concept. Girls are equally good in possessing higher levels of self-concept especially in physical, educational and intellectual aspects. It reflects appropriate educational implications in providing gender equality. Parents, teachers and community should give equal importance to girls and should provide equal educational opportunities.

**Key words:** Adolescence, ideal-self, self-concept, self-esteem, self-image.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Self-development begins with the dawning of self-awareness in infancy and gradually evolves into a rich multifaceted, organized view of the self's characteristics and capacities during childhood (Laura, 2013) [1]. Children begin to construct a self-concept, the set of attributes, abilities, attitudes, and values that an individual believes, defines who he or she is. An individual with a strong, positive self-concept views the world quite differently from one whose self-concept is weak. The self-concept does not necessarily reflect reality; a person may be highly successful and respected, yet view himself as a failure. The individual evaluates every experience in relation to his or her self-concept. The self is not rigid but flexible so that it can change as it adapts new experiences and ideas.

Self-concept is of our personal knowledge that who we are, encircling all of our thoughts and feelings about ourselves physically, personally, and socially. Self-concept includes the knowledge of our behavior, our abilities and characteristics. Self-concept develops most rapidly during early childhood and adolescence, but self-concept remains to form and change over time as we learn more about ourselves. Self-concept involves a variety of different things that a person perceives. Self-concept may include material self, intrapersonal self and interpersonal self. Material self, our body, assets and other things in our lives. Intrapersonal self, our emotions, desires, needs, values, Interpersonal self, the views of others about us etc.

Carl Rogers (1959) [2], a humanistic psychologist, suggested that self-concept includes three components; such as, self-image, self-esteem or self-worth and ideal self.

**Self-image:** The view one has of oneself. Self-image includes what one knows about himself or herself physically, e.g., good looking, fair, tall etc., one's social roles e.g., husband, wife, brother, sister, and personality traits e.g., introvert, extrovert, outgoing, serious, cheerful, openminded etc. Self-image doesn't always match reality. Some individuals hold an exaggerated perception of one or more of their characteristics. These perceptions may be positive or negative, and an individual may have a more positive view of certain aspects of the self and a more negative view of others.

**Self-Esteem:** How much value one places on oneself. Individual levels of self-esteem are dependent on the way one evaluates himself. Those evaluations incorporate his personal comparisons to others as well as others' responses to him. Self-esteem is simply a belief about our own worth. If a person has low self-esteem, it means that they do not value themselves highly. They think they are of less worth than other people. Near-synonyms of self-esteem include: self-worth, self-regard, self-respect, self-love, and self-integrity. Implicit self-esteem refers to a person's disposition to evaluate

themselves positively or negatively in a spontaneous or unconscious manner. It contrasts with explicit self-esteem, which entails more conscious and reflective self-evaluation.

**Ideal Self:** The ideal self is the self we would like to be. There is often a difference between one's self-image and one's ideal self. This incongruity or inappropriateness can negatively impact one's self-esteem. According to Carl Rogers, self-image and ideal self can be congruent or incongruent. Congruence between the self-image and ideal self means that there is a fair amount of overlap between the two. While it is difficult to achieve perfect congruence, greater congruence will enable self-actualization.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-CONCEPT

Self-concept begins to develop in early childhood. This process continues throughout the lifespan. However, it is between early childhood and adolescence that self-concept experiences the most growth. By age two, children begin to differentiate themselves from others. By the ages of three and four, children understand that they are separate and unique selves. At this stage, a child's self-image is largely descriptive, based mostly on physical characteristics or concrete details. Yet, children increasingly pay attention to their capabilities, and by about six years old, children can communicate what they want and need. They are also starting to define themselves in terms of social groups.

Between the ages of seven and eleven, children begin to make social comparisons and consider how they are perceived by others. At this stage, children's descriptions of themselves become more abstract. They begin to describe themselves in terms of abilities and not just concrete details, and they realize that their characteristics exist on a continuum. For example, a child at this stage will begin to see himself as more athletic than some and less athletic than others, rather than simply athletic or not athletic. At this point, the ideal self and self-image start to develop.

By age ten or eleven, children assess their academic abilities by comparing themselves to their peers. It is called as academic self-concept and it refers to the personal beliefs about their academic abilities or skills. It begins developing from ages three to five due to influence from parents and early educators. Social psychologist Roy Baumeister (2010) [3] states that self-concept should be understood as a knowledge structure. People pay attention to themselves, noticing both their internal states and responses and their external behavior. Through such self-awareness, people collect information about themselves. Self-concept is built from this information and continues to develop as people expand their ideas about who they are.

## 3. SELF-CONCEPT DURING ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence refers to the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Its age limits are not clearly specified, but extended roughly from age twelve to the late teens when physical growth is nearly complete. During this period the young person develops to sexual maturity, establishes his identity as an individual apart from his family and faces the task of deciding how to earn a living. (Ernest R Hilgard et al, 1975) [4].

Adolescence is a key period for self-concept. The self-concept established during adolescence is usually the basis for the self-concept for the remainder of one's life. During the adolescent years, people experiment with different roles, personas, and selves. For adolescents, self-concept is influenced by success in areas they value and the responses of others valued to them. Success and approval can contribute to greater self-esteem and a stronger self-concept into adulthood.

Physical self-concept is the individual's perception of themselves in areas of physical ability and appearance. Physical ability includes concepts such as physical strength and stamina, while appearance refers to attractiveness and body image. Adolescents experience significant changes in general physical self-concept at the onset of puberty about eleven years old for girls and about fifteen years old for boys. The bodily changes during puberty, in conjunction with the various psychological aspects of this period, makes adolescence especially significant for the development of physical self-concept. Girls on the average mature early than the boys, but there are large individual differences. The children who mature late have poorer self-concepts, and engage in more immature attention-seeking behavior. The late-maturing girls, like boys, may have less adequate self-concepts and poorer relations with parents and peers.

## 4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hulya Asci (2002) [5], has investigated on the age and gender differences in physical self-concept among Turkish late adolescents. The purpose of the study was to evaluate age and gender differences in physical self-concept of Turkish university students. The Physical Self-Perception Profile was administered to participants for assessing physical self-

concept. Multivariate analysis of variance revealed a significant main effect for gender, but no significant main effect for year in school. There was also no year in school by gender interaction. Univariate analysis indicated significant gender differences in sport competence, physical condition, body attractiveness, and physical strength (favoring males except for body attractiveness).

Catherine Sebastian et al (2008) [6], investigated on development of the self-concept during adolescence. The researchers reviewed recent behavioral and neuro-imaging studies on adolescent development of the self-concept. These studies have shown that adolescence is an important developmental period for the self and its supporting neural structures.

Aruna Bharathiand Sreedevi (2016) [7] investigated the self-concept of adolescent girls. Self-concept scale of Saraswat (1984) [8] was used to analyze the self-concept of 40 adolescent girls of twin cities of Hyderabad, Telangana State. The findings of the study revealed that higher percentage of adolescents had above average levels of self-concept in dimension of temperamental, intellectual, physical and social. About 47.5 percent of adolescents equally had high and above average self-concept in education. And 57.5 percent of adolescents had high moral self-concept. Adolescents overall Self-concept was found as 27.5 percent in high and 72.5 per cent have above average. Hence, the study may help the teachers and parents to maintain the optimum level of self-concept of adolescents.

Jagpreet Kaur et.al(2017) [9], made a study to explore academic achievement and home environment as correlates of self-concept in a sample of 300 adolescents. The results of the study revealed self-concept to be positively correlated with academic achievement, though not significantly so. A significantly positive relationship of home environment components of protectiveness, conformity, reward, and nurturance with self-concept. Use of rewards and nurturance from parents should be done for positive self-concept development among adolescents. However, the correlation of social isolation, deprivation of privileges and rejection components of home environment is significantly negative with self-concept among adolescents. Indicating that for positive self-concept development among adolescents, there should be less or no use of social isolation, deprivation of privileges and rejection. The study has implications for educationists and parents as well.

Bhanu and Keya Chatterjee (2021) [10], have studied on Self Concept Among Adolescent Girls with and without siblings. The objective of the study was to find out the self-concept among adolescent girl only child and adolescent girl children with siblings. It was found that there is no difference in self-concept among adolescent only child and adolescent children with siblings.

Early adolescents are more likely to compare themselves with others and imagine that others are making judgments about them. They also give higher value to these judgments. During adolescence, social environment, interpersonal relationships undergo rapid changes and contribute to changes in the self-concept. The aspects of self-concept, such as, physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual are fully recognized during this period. The present study is an attempt to investigate self-concept among adolescent girls in relation to boys.

## 5. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the present study is to explore the self-concept among adolescent girls. A descriptive survey method is adopted for the present study. It is a quantitative research framework. The purposive sample of 50 adolescents, both boys and girls, studying in ninth class from four government high schools of Hyderabad are selected through simple random technique.

The objectives of the study are 1. to find the self-concept levels among adolescent girls. 2. to assess the difference among adolescent boys and girls in relation to the dimensions of self-concept.

To assess the self-concept among adolescent girls a standardized self-concept questionnaire, developed by Dr. Saraswat (1984) [8] is adopted. The tool consists of six dimensions of self-concept. Such as, physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual. The operational definitions of these dimensions are:

- **Physical:** Individual's view of their body, health, physical appearance and strength.
- **Social:** Individual's sense of worth in social interactions.
- **Temperamental:** Individual's view of their prevailing emotional state or predominance of a particular kind of emotional reaction.
- **Educational:** Individual's view of themselves in relation to school, teachers and extracurricular activities.
- **Moral:** Individual's estimation of their moral worth; right and wrong activities.
- **Intellectual:** Individual's awareness of their intelligence and capacity of problem solving and judgements.

## 6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the purpose of this study 25 adolescent boys and 25 adolescent girl students were selected from four High Schools in Hyderabad. The above-mentioned standardized questionnaire was administered on these samples. The responses of students were analyzed for the Self-Concept among adolescents as a whole comparing the per cent of Self-Concept in Boys to that in Girls. The data is tabulated in Table 1.

**Table 1. Self-Concept among adolescents**

Gender of Students	Number of Students	per cent of Self-Concept				Mean
		High	Above average	Average	Below average	
Boys	25	12	88	--	--	180.96
Girls	25	08	92	--	--	174.48

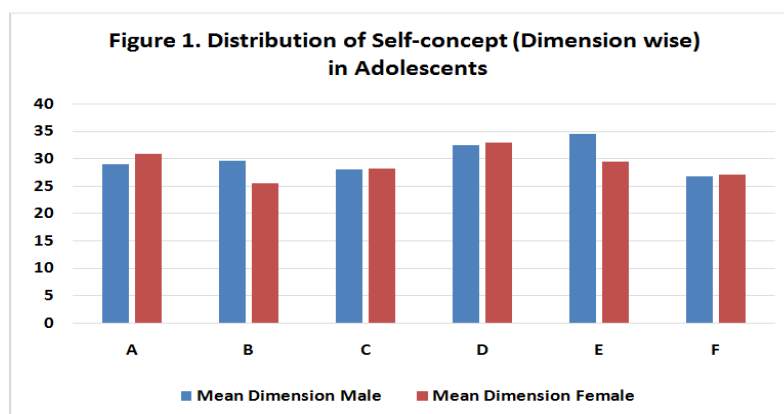
The Mean of Self-Concept is also presented in the Table. The High Self-Concept of Boys and Girls is 12 and 8 percent respectively and for the rest it is above average. The Mean score of Total Self-Concept is also above average and is little less in Girls than Boys.

The dimension wise Self-Concept in terms of percentage is tabulated in Table 2 along with their Mean value. The same also is shown graphically in Figure 1.

**Table 2. Distribution of Self-Concept (Dimension wise) in Adolescents**

Self-Concept Dimensions	Gender	Number of Students	Per cent of Self-Concept				Mean Self-Concept
			High	Above Average	Average	Below average	
Physical (A)	Boys	25	16	84	--	--	29.0
	Girls	25	24	76	--	--	30.9
Social (B)	Boys	25	28	64	08	--	29.7
	Girls	25	04	72	16	08	25.6
Tempera-mental (C)	Boys	25	16	60	24	--	28.2
	Girls	25	08	84	08	--	28.2
Educational (D)	Boys	25	68	28	04	--	32.6
	Girls	25	64	36	--	--	33.0
Moral (E)	Boys	25	72	28	--	--	34.6
	Girls	25	20	56	24	--	29.6
Intellectual (F)	Boys	25	16	84	--	--	26.9
	Girls	25	08	64	28	--	27.1

From the Table and figure, it can be observed that the Mean of the Physical Self-Concept for Boys and Girls is 29.0 and 30.9, indicating that the Physical Self-Concept is almost same. That is Physically and in terms of good health Girls are in equal terms with Boys. This is a very good sign for the family culture in Society. If we examine the per cent of Physical Self-Concept of Boys and Girls, a greater number of Girls are with High Physical Concept than the Boys.



The Mean of Social Self-Concept among Girl students is less comparing to that of Boys. This is may be because of less social exposure of girls than the Boys. However, the gap between the Social Self-Concept is not high indicating the improved social movement and empowerment among Girls. The Social Self-Concept gap between Boys and Girls is more evident from the fact that only 04 per cent of Girls are with High Social Self-Concept compared to 28 per cent of Boys. Other significant observation is that the percentage of Girls with Average Social Self-Concept is almost double to that of Boys and there are Girls with Below Average Social Self-Concept. This is the clear indication is that the social interaction of Girls is definitely less compared to that of Boys and there is a need to improve the social exposure of Girls to the Society.

The Mean of Temperamental Self-Concept among Boys and Girls is same. If we examine student-wise, 08 per cent of Girls are with High Temperamental Self-Concept compared to that of 16 for Boys. Similarly, 08 per cent of Girls are with Average Temperamental Self-Concept compared to that of 24 for Boys. This is the clear indication that the reflection of Girls on an average is always sharp compared to that of Boys.

The Mean of Educational Self-Concept is almost same, indicating the equal awareness on the need of the education in one's life. On an average equal number of Girls and Boys have High Educational Self-Concept and rest are with Above Average Self-Concept. This observation is significant in the sense that the Women empowerment strategies of the Governmental agencies are fruitful to the maximum extent.

The Moral Self-Concept of Girls is less compared to that of Boys as the values are 29.6 and 34.6 respectively. Large number of Boys are with High Moral Self-Concept than Girls and among Girls there are good number of students with Average Moral Self-Concept. That, is on the whole Girls are with significantly less Moral Self-Concept than Boys. It appears that Temperamental Self-Concept and Moral Self-Concept are complementary to each other.

From the values it is evident that the Mean Intellectual Self-Concept of Boys and Girls are almost same. However, the percentage of Boys with High Intellectual Self-Concept is double to that of Girls and 28% of Girls are with Average Intellectual Self-Concept indicating that intellectually Girls are little weak than Boys. Both Parents and Teachers have to do some work on them to improve the Intellectual Self-Concept of Girls.

On the whole Girls are on equal footing with Boys in Physical Self-Concept, Temperamental Self-Concept and Educational Self-Concept. These three Self-Concepts more or less are due to the family background, parental care, psychological status of the family and educational awareness of the family.

However, in Social, Moral and Intellectual Self-Concepts Girls are significantly lagging behind. These Self-Concepts depend on the social exposure, quality curriculum and moral education, understanding of concepts, good analytical training etc.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

From the above investigation and based on the analysis of the data the following conclusions can be drawn. In the present context the adolescent girls, who are studying in government schools of Hyderabad have above average and high level of self-concept. Girls are equally good in possessing higher levels of self-concept especially in physical, educational and intellectual aspects. It reflects appropriate educational implications in providing gender equality. Parents, teachers and community should give equal importance to girls and should provide equal educational opportunities.

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