



# Impact of Internalized Misogyny and Gender Role Attitudes on Self Esteem in Young Adult Women

Jahnvi Shrivastava<sup>1</sup>

B.A. (Honours/Research) Applied Psychology

Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences Amity University Uttar Pradesh

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## ABSTRACT

While modern social environments often imply an absence of patriarchal constraints, young adult women continue to report internal psychological barriers to self-worth. This study examined the impact of Internalized Misogyny and Gender Role Attitudes on the Self-Esteem of young adult women in the Indian sociocultural context. Using a quantitative, cross-sectional design, data were collected from 203 women (ages 18–30) through the Internalized Misogyny Scale (IMS), the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Spearman correlation and multiple linear regression analysis were employed to test the hypotheses. Results indicated a significant strong negative correlation between Internalized Misogyny and Self-Esteem ( $r_s = -0.63, p < .001$ ) and a significant moderate negative correlation between Gender Role Attitudes and Self-Esteem ( $r_s = -0.43, p < .001$ ). The multiple regression model was statistically significant,  $F(2, 200) = 42.15, p < .001, (R^2 = .408)$ , revealing that Internalized Misogyny is a more potent unique predictor of Self-Esteem than general Gender Role Attitudes. These findings suggest that the "patriarchy inside the head" significantly impairs identity consolidation during young adulthood. The study highlights the need for psychological interventions that target internalized sexist beliefs to foster genuine empowerment and mental well-being among Indian women.

**Keywords:** *Internalized Misogyny, Gender Role Attitudes, Self-Esteem, Young Adulthood, Indian Women, Feminist Psychology.*

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## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Although daily life scenarios continue to underscore less obvious psychological residues of sexism that shape self-judgments and life decisions of women, gender equality rhetoric nowadays often suggests that young women reside in a socially constructed environment that is essentially devoid of visible forms of patriarchal control (Gill, 2007). Numerous young adult females continue to record sustained self-doubt, hyper self-criticism as well as ambivalent attitudes towards their respective gendered identities in spite of official gains in education, employment and legal rights. This implies that it is not only external barriers that are in play but internal psychological mechanisms (Calogero, 2013). Internalized misogyny, a process by which sexist societal views are internalized, affirmed and projected inward by women themselves, is becoming a more popular lens through which to view these internal mechanisms (Bearman, Korobov, and Thorne, 2009). Eagly and Wood (2012) also argue that gender role attitudes are still the factors that dictate how women should think, feel, and behave. Such beliefs indirectly shape the self-esteem of women by creating norms of self-sacrifice, conformity and emotional containment. Being one of the primary evaluative features of the self, self-esteem emerges as an important site where such internalized conceptions collide and have a more lasting effect at the stage of development involving higher levels of self-reflection and identity formation (Arnett, 2000).

A perfect psychological space to facilitate the young adult women would theoretically allow ideas of gender co-exist with self-worth without invalidating it, where own meanings, rather than imposed norms, are the building block to individual worth (Rogers, 1961). Self-esteem might remain relatively stable across contexts and interpersonal relations and gender roles might be treated more flexibly in such an environment without the underlying fear that the deviance would lead to social or moral reprisals (Hyde, 2014). Nevertheless, most women absorb social constructions that implicitly depict femininity as inferior, weak or morally questionable, often without their conscious awareness (Szymanski et al., 2009). This balance is therefore hardly achieved. This process is perpetuated by gender role attitudes that make concern about oneself contingent and not inherent, promote conformity and inhibit disobedience, and place women in a continuous loop of self-observation (Prentice and Carranza, 2002).

Young adulthood is a highly sensitive period in the processes of identity formation as people actively integrate their identity, autonomy or relationship roles in the process of balancing new pressures of their schooling, work and relationships with others (Arnett, 2000). At this stage, women are often encouraged to be self-confident, self-sufficient, and self-reliant yet they must still contend with prescriptive norms that covertly govern ambition, expression of emotion and interaction of person to person (Rudman and Glick, 2001). Prentice and Carranza (2002) noted that the standards of their research do not impose explicit prohibitions but rather cause moral judgment and covert appraisal that individuals consider to be individual and not social. The personal conversations that women undergo will influence their self-worth perception as they embrace the cultural beliefs of femininity rather than challenge them in the open (Szymanski, Gupta, Carr, and Stewart, 2009).

The main issue that this research paper tries to tackle is the tension between increasing social possibilities and ongoing psychological constraints. Though young adult women are encouraged to be self-reliant, ambitious, and assertive, they still have to struggle against the inner voice that defines these attributes as non-feminine or as threats to interpersonal relationships (Rudman and Glick, 2001). Past research has often considered sexist behaviors, gender role attitudes and self-esteem as separate phenomena which has restricted our knowledge about the relationships between them within an individual (Glick and Fiske, 1996). Similarly, the study of gender role attitudes has concentrated on the patterns of social approval and has disregarded their effects on inner evaluation of competence and value by women (Donnelly et al., 2015). The aim of the research is the elaborate conceptual explanation to bring the self-esteem of women within the broad spectrum of sociocultural processes linked to the internalization of gender in young adult females.

### ➤ *Internalized Misogyny*

Pigott (2004) defines internalized misogyny as the internalization of sexist concepts imprinted within patriarchal cultures by women that can affect their emotional lives and self-perception. This is a theory of internalized oppression in which self-concept and behaviour of an individual is influenced by repeated exposure to uncontested stereotypes (Pigott, 2004). In practice, it is shown when women underrate their achievement or are awkward in wielding power despite advocating gender equality (Bearman & Amrhein, 2014).

This process is driven by self-hatred, which was historically manifested in the response to the powerless conditions of the oppressed groups (Lewin, 1948). Frustration is frequently focused inward or toward one's own group when opposition becomes hazardous, which reinforces psychological surrender (Lewin, 1948). System justification theory (Jost and Banaji, 1994; Cowan et al., 1998) suggests that female individuals can internalize stereotyping that supports inequality and assume that discrimination is a specter that must be accepted or even warranted, therefore, sustaining patriarchal hierarchies.

Women in patriarchal societies are positioned in an odd majority-minority relationship, in which they have power over men individually but not structurally as a group. This gives an incentive to people belonging to the majority group to conform to the standards of masculinity in order to find safety and confirmation (Dworkin, 1983). This cycle is perpetuated by means like victim-

blaming rhetoric. By identifying imperfections in other females, one is able to continue perpetrating sexist notions of patriarchy and avoid the sensation of vulnerability (Angelone et al., 2021). Bearman and Amrhein (2014) found that inequality was ingrained in the subconscious of women by grouping internalized oppression into patterns that recur such as objectification, invalidation, competition and helplessness.

#### ➤ *Gender Role Attitudes*

Gender role attitudes refer to the views of people on how women and men should act in the social, family, work and political contexts (Eagly and Wood, 2012). Such attitudes are evident when individuals make daily judgments such as whether a female worker is too aggressive, or whether women ought to give care to children and elderly adults since it is her nature or since society expects it of them (Ridgeway, 2011). Gender role attitudes might be considered as simple schemes according to which we process information about women and men (Bem, 1981).

The social role theory conceptually explains gender role attitudes. It presents the argument that perceptions of female and male roles and abilities become ingrained, leading to the segregation of labor between the genders (Eagly, 1987). In this view, attitudes represent a response to historical injustices that support the injustices and they are beyond individual choices (Wood and Eagly, 2010). The theory of gender schema, which justifies this idea, argues that people organize the information concerning gender into mental patterns. These frames often influence our perception about ourselves and others without our conscious awareness (Bem, 1983).

One of the most utilised empirical tools in assessing the gender roles attitudes is the Attitudes Towards Women Scale which was created by Spence and Helmreich (1978). The scale enables researchers to quantify the extent to which individuals uphold traditional or egalitarian beliefs by encompassing concepts on the roles of women in schooling, working, sexuality, marriage and autonomy (Spence and Helmreich, 1978). What makes it remain relevant is its sensitivity to more subtle forms of inequity that survive despite socially disapproved blatant sexism (Swim et al., 1995).

#### ➤ *Self Esteem*

Self-esteem describes the way that individuals evaluate themselves in terms of their value, competence and worthiness as a person, and it changes the societal gender ideology to the internal landscape of the self (Rosenberg, 1965). This self-assessment can be implicitly observed in seemingly ordinary circumstances in everyday life, such as a failure to say something during an appointment or project success to luck instead of performance (Orth & Robins, 2014). Self-esteem, in concept, is a relatively stable and somewhat fluid sense of objectively oneself as a result of a continuous interaction with both internal standards and social influence (Mruk, 2013).

The most important operationalization of this notion was offered by Rosenberg who described self-esteem as a universal attitude towards the self that fluctuates between the state of acceptance to the state of rejection (Rosenberg, 1965). Rather than capturing this evaluative element with momentary confidence or domain-specific competence, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was developed to measure the element via statements that describe self-respect, a perceived adequate capacity, and feelings of personal failure (Rosenberg, 1979). It is the ability to distinguish between permanent self-worth and temporary emotional states, which is still theoretically important, that permits its use across cultural boundaries (Schmitt and Allik, 2005).

Sociometer theory suggests that alteration in self-worth signifies perceived acceptance or disapproval in the groups one values and so, self-esteem is a subconscious measure of social inclusion (Leary and Baumeister, 2000). According to this view, self-esteem is a socially adapted cue that responds to the relational environment, such as gendered expectations as well as judgments, not an intrapsychic trait (Leary, 2005). Symbolic interactionist perspectives are in agreement with this notion by accentuating the perception of self-esteem as it forms through reflected evaluations where individuals learn to view themselves through the eyes of other individuals (Mead, 1934).

#### ➤ *Theoretical Integration of Key Variables*

Empirical research has repeatedly linked internalized sexist concepts to the detrimental development of negative psychological conditions in women, including low self-esteem, body-dissatisfaction, and predisposition to anxiety and depression (Szymanski et al., 2009). Ambivalent sexism research has demonstrated that even subjectively desirable gender ideals such as idealization of women as loving or pure, support dependency and self-doubt when internalized (Glick and Fiske, 2001).

Additional studies about gender role attitudes have shown that conventional role support is attributed to the low self-concept of women and low psychological flexibility especially in an atmosphere where conformity takes precedence over independence (Prentice et al., 2002; Donnelly et al., 2015). Research on self-esteem development has suggested that women are more susceptible to internalized gender standards as their self-evaluations are more closely associated with social approbation and relational feedback than men (Orth and Robins, 2014).

Nevertheless, well-recognized theories, such as the objectification theory, proposed by Barbara Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), focus largely on the question of body-based self-surveillance, and have not explored more broad areas of ethical evaluation,

interpersonal comparison by and identity-based devaluation (Calogero and Tylka, 2014). Despite the critical nature of these developments, they often pursue the elements of internalization as an isolated principle, without adequately addressing how different systems of belief associated with gender relate to each other in forming the overall sense of worth (Moradi & Huang, 2008).

When integrated, these ideas form a rational psychological model where self-esteem is the outcome of negotiating these internalized beliefs about self, gender role attitudes generate expectations as well as behavioral limits and internalized misogyny provide evaluative material (Szymanski et al., 2009). This study contributes to the academic domain of feminist psychology by empirically relating cultural ideologies to fundamental self-concept processes. Practically speaking, it offers insights, which can be implemented by mental health practitioners, practitioners and those who design interventions to advance the psychological well-being of women outside superficial empowerment discourses.

#### ➤ *Rationale of the Study*

The need for this study stems from a discrepancy that existing research has largely sidestepped: the simultaneous, interacting influence of internalized misogyny and gender role attitudes on the self-esteem of young adult women. Most psychological investigations treat these constructs separately, examining sexist behavior in isolation, or measuring self-esteem without adequately situating it within a gendered sociocultural context (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Moradi & Huang, 2008). That separation creates a fragmented picture. Young adulthood makes this gap especially consequential. This is precisely the period when identity formation is most active, when women are simultaneously absorbing cultural scripts about femininity and trying to construct a coherent, autonomous sense of self (Arnett, 2000). The tension between being told to be ambitious and being covertly penalized for it is not abstract.

This study is therefore justified not only theoretically but practically. If self-esteem in young women is shaped by the intersection of internalized misogyny and gender role attitudes rather than by either factor alone, then interventions that address only one dimension will remain partially effective at best. A therapeutic framework that builds confidence without interrogating the gendered belief systems underneath it is addressing the symptom while leaving the architecture intact (Szymanski et al., 2009). System justification research makes this urgency clearer: women may actively endorse beliefs that disadvantage them precisely because those beliefs are woven into their self-concept, not imposed from outside (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Eagly and Wood (2012) reinforce this by noting that gender role attitudes are not merely social descriptors but prescriptive forces that govern how women think and feel about themselves. By examining these variables together within the developmental context of young adulthood, this study attempts to produce a more coherent and usable model of how cultural ideology becomes self-concept. The goal is to give researchers and clinicians a more complete foundation to work from, one that takes seriously the interior consequences of living inside gendered social structures (Calogero, 2013).

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Internalized misogyny is the mechanism through which women end up unintentionally accepting, supporting and perpetuating sexist and patriarchal ideas which serve to denigrate women and femininity, and center these ideas on themselves and other women (Ertl & Ahn, 2025). Real-life application of internalized misogyny has progressed significantly in more recent work. On a large sample of cis-women living in the USA, Ertl and Ahn (2025) created and tested the Measure of Internalized Misogyny (MIM), which demonstrated a high psychometric reliability and a negative correlation with self-esteem. Even though this study has a cross-sectional design which limits the possibility of causation, its strength in methodology lies in the rigor of scale development.

Ulman (2025) summarized psychopathological symptoms of internalized sexism that linked low self-esteem to guilt, perfectionism, emotional repression and disordered eating. The absence of quantitative synthesis in this review limits the estimation of the effects of the study despite its theoretical richness. There is limited research that specifically examines the interaction between the perceptions of gender roles and internalized sexism. Dai et al. (2025) state that the exposure of young adult women to conventional gender representations in the advertisement ultimately reduces their self-esteem and reinforces sexist thoughts. Even though internalized sexism is not reported as a mediator, this longitudinal study does exhibit cumulative socialization effects.

Through a phenomenological method to study the daily experience of cisgender women who are young adults, Schwabe (2024) provided qualitative data concerning the developmental aspects of internalized misogyny. The primary means, according to the study, through which misogyny is internalized and results in body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and a sense of worthlessness, include self-objectification, internalization of beauty ideals, and chronic self-surveillance. Despite the study being rich in contextual detail, its empirical generality is constrained by a limited number of participants and subjective methods.

Internalized sexism has a significant negative relationship with self-esteem, based on a coherent body of knowledge. The "patriarchy inside our heads" is how Evteeva et al. (2024) defined internalized sexism. They claimed that women who embrace conventional ideas of beauty and value experience a state of low self-esteem and constant self-devaluation. Based on the earlier empirical studies, the authors reported that internalized sexism was related to greater emotional attachment in men and negative associations with both personal and group self-esteem. The article is predominantly theoretical, but it provides a synthesis of empirical information to demonstrate psychological effects in an adept manner. The psychological consequences of traditional gender role perceptions among women are emphasized by the existing studies, such as, as one of the broad surveys by Grabe et al. (2024) showed, the approval of traditional femininity norms by young women was positively correlated with self-silencing and negatively correlated with self-esteem. Despite the cross-sectional nature of the study which does not allow one to infer causation, the strength of the paper lies in its feminist analysis framework.

Besides the quantitative study, Han et al. (2023) also examined the measurement invariance of Internalized Misogyny Scale in heterosexual women and non-heterosexual women. Their findings, which proved that the concept of internalized sexism is similar across sexual orientations, helped to strengthen the usefulness of the instrument. The implications on self-esteem are essentially inferential as the main concern of the study was on psychometric validation rather than on psychological outcomes. High levels of internalized misogyny were identified as one of the significant predictors of psychological distress and low self-esteem in an empirical study of internalized misogyny among sexual minority women carried out by Rische (2023). The research also established that self-expression of women was confined by self-censorship, self-doubt and mistrust of other women which directly associated physical appearance with self-esteem. It has limitations in generalization to the entire population of young adult women because of the focus of the researchers on sexual minority women only although it offers valuable information on the marginalized groups.

All results, however, are not consistent. Endendijk (2023) states that there was no significant difference between the levels of self-esteem between emerging adults with balanced or unbalanced gender-specific identity profiles. This demonstrates conceptual heterogeneity in the operationalization of gender role attitudes and suggests that not all cognitions related to gender bear an equal influence upon self-esteem. As Santoniccolo et al. (2023) note, exposure to stereotyped media imagery was associated with worse self-efficacy and self-esteem and strengthened adherence to pre-existing gender ideals. The same findings can be compared with the qualitative evidence on the internalization of explicit media messages introduced by Schwabe (2024).

Although they factored in body dissatisfaction and depressive symptoms, Calogero and Tylka (2023) found internalized misogyny to be a strong predictor of lower self-esteem in a multi-culturally diverse sample of 18 to 30-year-old women. The greatest strength of the study lies in the strong structural equation modeling, but the causality of the results is inadequately covered due to the fact that these measures are self-reported. Yu and Zheng (2023) tested a population of young adult women on a moderate mediation model and discovered that the negative impacts of traditional gender-role beliefs on self-esteem were increased by internalized sexism. The researchers employed recently developed scales which had minimal psychometric validation, although it was a well-developed methodology. Available evidence suggests an interactive relationship between internalized misogyny and gender role beliefs even though limited studies examine this relationship in particular.

Harrington et al. (2022) state that feminine gender role discrepancy strain or the sense of being incompetent in relation to internalized femininity norms were a severe damage to the self-esteem of women on a day-to-day and weekly basis. This strain reflects internalized gender norms which are closely connected with sexist self-evaluation. Bozkur and Sahin (2022) found that the concept of self-alienation, which is directly related to self-esteem, and exposure to traditional gender role discourses were mediated by internalized sexism. This paradigm of mediation argues that it is through internalization processes that gender role attitudes influence self-concept. On the same note, fragmented self-esteem and an augmented self-criticism were related to higher levels of internalized misogyny, as proposed by Pila et al. (2022), whose article examined internalized sexism and clarity of self-concept in university women. Despite the fact that the study enhanced construct validity, it did not consider the overlap between sociocultural factors such as socioeconomic position and ethnicity.

Conversely, a longitudinal study by Martinez-Perez et al. (2021) indicates that internalized misogyny can predict self-esteem decreases over time, which can be referred to as temporal antecedent. The sample was predominated by Westerners which led to concerns over the issue of cultural generalizability. Other studies, however, give contradictory findings. According to Donnelly et al. (2020), not all of the traditional gender-related attitudes were always associated with worse self-esteem, particularly in women who received identity affirmation by virtue of their culturally-accepted femininity roles. This would mean that the influence of gender role attitudes on self-esteem may differ under different circumstances, underscoring the necessity for complex models. Moreover, Hentschel et al. (2019) demonstrated that women with a supportive attitude to egalitarianism in gender roles demonstrated a high level of psychological autonomy and self-esteem. The authors used experimental vignette research design to provide the data on the assimilation of gender stereotypes as a cognitive mechanism affecting self-evaluation. However, Intensive lab settings may reduce ecological validity

Settles et al. (2018) discovered that exposure to sexist socialization during this phase is an indicator of internalized sexism, which correlates with poor self-esteem. Nevertheless, these researches often confuse adolescence and young adulthood, and obscure the developmental differences. It was also discovered in an investigation by Pigott (2018) that gender role attitudes are often the carriers of misogynistic beliefs, particularly when revealed as personal preference and not ideology. There is little empirical evidence to support this statement. Glick et al. (2018) discovered that benevolent sexism is a subtle form of misogyny, which has a strong relationship with low self-worth among intercultural young women. Although the cross-national samples enhance the generalizability, the cultural differences were not explored completely. The same was supported in a study by Kucharska (2018) as empirically feminist identification was found to be a protective factor with the same being associated positively with self-esteem. Dehlin (2018) conducted research on Internalized misogyny associating it with functioning and sociopolitical behaviour and showed that low self-worth had a much higher impact on psychosocial functioning.

A Longitudinal study by Vespa (2017) comparing gender belief system and self-concept between men and women in early adulthood revealed that women who retained traditional gender role attitudes do not experience self-esteem growth over time, particularly when their life experiences conflicted with their assigned roles, although this study did not consider any broader ideological variables such as internalized misogyny. Cross-cultural studies also complicate the consensus such as a study by Kwon and Park (2016) discovered that traditional gender-role stereotypes did not always correlate with lower self-esteem in young women in collectivistic contexts, suggesting that culture moderates this effect, but it encounters the same restriction.

According to a study conducted by Johnson (2014) that involved a relationship between Internalized misogyny and reduced self-worth, a negative body image and depressive symptoms in adult women, it was found that internalized misogyny mediated the effect of thin-ideal internalization and disordered eating. The large cohort of age (18-64 years), however, reduced developmental specificity.

Overall, the evidence is highly indicative of how internalized misogyny and gender role attitudes play a vital role in the self-esteem of women, yet it also indicates theoretical fragmentation, developmental ambiguity in addition to inadequate integrative modeling. The existing body of research offers a solid foundation on conducting research on these dimensions simultaneously, but it lacks the depth of explaining their combination effect in young adulthood.

#### ➤ *Research Gap*

The key gap in the literature is that the variables are not integrated to be studied and that the studies consider internalized misogyny, gender role attitude to be parallel and independent predictors of self-esteem as opposed to being concurrent determinants. This makes it difficult to understand how gendered perceptions are internalized, strengthened and ultimately adopted as self-perceptions. Another significant research gap is that of a lack of specific developmental focus because the studies often combine adolescence and young adulthood or employ too wide scopes when it has been determined that the young adulthood is an epitome stage of identity and belief consolidation and greater autonomy.

The use of mixed samples and lack of emphasis on the experience of women as the primary source of analysis in the study is another research gap that restricts our knowledge regarding how self-esteem of women is a gendered psychological effect caused by internalized beliefs. The other important problem is that there are few studies carried out within the Indian sociocultural context. Most of the available studies use Western samples on the assumption that misogyny and gender roles operate in similar ways,

whereas India has strong patriarchal cultures, collective values, and crossings of culture, family and gender socialization. These contextual factors are most likely to affect nature and even the degree of internalized sexism in a manner that western theories are unable to explain.

By sealing these gaps, the present study fulfills the requirement of a holistic, developmentally-focused, female-centered, and culturally-grounded body of knowledge of how internalized misogyny and gender role attitudes impact self-esteem among young adult women in India.

➤ *Objective and Hypothesis*

• *The Objective of the Study Included:*

- ✓ To examine the relationship between Internalized Misogyny and Self-Esteem among young adult women.
- ✓ To study the relationship between Gender Role Attitudes and Self-Esteem among young adult women.
- ✓ To determine the combined impact of Internalized Misogyny and Gender Role Attitudes on Self-Esteem among young adult women.

• *The Hypotheses of the Study were:*

- ✓ H1- Internalized Misogyny would be significantly negatively associated with Self-Esteem among young adult women.
- ✓ H2- Gender Role Attitudes would be significantly negatively associated with Self-Esteem among young adult women.
- ✓ H3- Internalized Misogyny and Gender Role Attitudes would significantly predict Self-Esteem among young adult women.

## CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

### ➤ *Research Design*

The present study used a quantitative, cross-sectional design to explore how internalized misogyny and gender role attitudes relate to self-esteem among young adult women in India. The design was selected since it enabled these psychological constructs to be quantified in a distinct and systematic fashion through well-established measures besides being able to explore the relationship of these constructs in the real-world scenario. The study was not trying to trace the change over time or make causal inferences but only finding meaningful associations as they are at a specific point in time. Young adulthood is the stage at which the identity issue, gender expectations and self-esteem are of particular concern, which is why the specified inquiry fits this stage perfectly. Simultaneously, the cross-sectional method provided a viable means of collecting information within a constrained timeframe without affecting the level of analysis or the validity of the adopted methodology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### ➤ *Sample and Sampling Technique*

The research employed a method of Random Sampling in the process of recruiting a given sample of respondents through internet sources and academic networking. The reason behind the use of this probability method is that all respondents are eligible to participate in the study based on random selection and this method is also practical within the context of the study. The sample consisted mainly of young adult women residing in India, aged 18-30 years, a total of  $N = 203$  individuals.

#### • *Inclusion Criteria*

- ✓ Participants were required to self-identify as women.
- ✓ The eligible age range for participation was 18–30 years.
- ✓ Participants needed to have sufficient English language proficiency to understand and respond to the questionnaire.

#### • *Exclusion Criteria*

- ✓ Individuals outside the specified age range were excluded from the study.
- ✓ Incomplete responses were removed from the dataset.
- ✓ Responses that appeared careless or lackadaisical were not included in the final analysis.

### ➤ *Psychometric Instrumentation*

#### • *The Internalized Misogyny Scale*

The Internalized Misogyny Scale (IMS) by Pigott (2004) was employed to measure the level of internalized misogyny. This 17-item test measures the extent to which women internalize patriarchal norms in addition to negative stereotypes of femininity on three main parameters that include the devaluation of women, mistrust of women and gender bias in favor of males. Participants rate items on a Likert scale, with higher overall scores indicating a greater acceptance of internalized gender inequality (refer APPENDIX A). The IMS has shown to be a reliable measurement historically. Its reliability is established, with Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficients ranging from .86 to .94 and strong test-retest stability. Additionally, the validity of the scale is based on its stable three-factor structure as well as logical links to related notions such as modern sexism ( $r = .22$ ) and a tendency for self-silencing ( $r = .23$ ).

#### • *Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS)*

Spence and Helmreich's (1972) core instrument, the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS), was employed to examine gender role attitudes, that is the perception of the participants concerning gender dynamics. The aim of this measure is to chart out concepts concerning women rights and responsibilities in most areas of their lives including social, education and working spheres. The AWS is based on a Likert-type response structure so that respondents can be accurately placed on a continuum between traditional and egalitarian attitudes (refer APPENDIX A). Higher scores indicate a stronger support for more equitable or progressive gender roles. The longevity of the scale in psychological research is supported by the good psychometric performance of the scale. It has a consistent alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of Cronbach ranging between .81 and .92 and excellent test-retest stability of  $r = .94$ . In addition to this, the validity of the scale can be justified by the demonstrated ability to differentiate among different demographic groups and the high correlations with other established sexism and gender identification scales.

#### • *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)*

The Technique of assessing the global self-worth, that is, Self Esteem, was through the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES) which was formulated by Rosenberg (1965). It is a test that aims to measure the general feeling of self-acceptance and value of an individual using a proportion of both positively and negatively phrased sentences. The participants were requested to provide their remarks on a Likert scale, where a greater aggregate score represented the feeling of self-worth (refer APPENDIX A). RSES is a psychological instrument that is associated with its efficacy and strong psychometric bases. Its internal consistency is good with the

Cronbach alpha( $\alpha$ ) varying between 0.77 and 0.88. It still has good test-retest reliability, and coefficients reported in the  $r = .82$  to  $.85$  range. The scale has also been widely shown to have high cross-cultural validity and dependability and structural integrity has been ensured over diverse samples in the world, as well as successful implementation in the Indian cultures.

➤ *Procedure*

Data was gathered over a period of one month, and the data was collected in a mixed-mode, 30 percent of the responses were gathered online, using an online survey platform, and 70 percent were gathered in-person, offline. After receiving ethical permission, the participants were provided with a confidentiality information sheet and signed an informed consent form--in the electronic form in the case of the online group and with paper in the case of the offline group. After the demographic eligibility screening, all the participants completed the Internalized Misogyny Scale, Attitudes Towards Women Scale and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in a pre-established sequence. All of the measures were accompanied with standardized instructions and the total time of participation was approximately between 10 and 15 minutes. They allowed the participants to drop out at any time through the process.

➤ *Ethical Considerations*

The current research proposal was carried out in complete compliance with the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017). Electronic consent to participate was given by all the participants before the survey commenced, and this confirmed their voluntary participation in the survey and that they were eligible to take part as women aged 18-30 (refer APPENDIX B). The level of involvement was purely on a voluntary basis and all respondents were free to withdraw at any point without any penalty or repercussion. The privacy of participants was ensured, and no identifiable details were gathered or associated with the responses due to the strict observation of anonymity and confidentiality; all data were handled in line with the existing data protection regulations.

Given that the topic of the study is sensitive, to include gender-based beliefs and self-worth, which might hold personal importance to some participants, the respondent's wellbeing was given specific attention. There was no form of deceit during the research. All these measures were necessary to ensure that the study adhered to the ethics.

➤ *Data Analysis*

The quantitative data were analyzed with JAMOVI (Version 2.7), and preliminary data processing, such as item recoding, reverse scoring, and composite scale calculation involved the use of Microsoft Excel. All three important variables including the Internalized Misogyny measured by Internalized Misogyny Scale (IMS), Gender Role Attitudes measured by the Attitudes Towards Women Scale (AWS) and Self-Esteem measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) were subjected to descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, median, range and skewness). The normality of all scale scores was tested formally before the occurrence of inferential analysis through the Shapiro-Wilk test.

Spearman rank-order correlation ( $\rho$ ) was used to test the relationships between Internalized Misogyny, Gender Role Attitudes and self-esteem because Pearson is a parametric test that cannot be used in this case since it has certain limitations (Field, 2018). After that, the multiple linear regression was conducted to investigate independent predictive effects of Internalized Misogyny and Gender Role Attitudes on Self-Esteem scores, where both predictors were placed at the same time, by using the Enter method. Together with the general model fit metrics ( $R^2$ , Adjusted  $R^2$ ), coefficients ( $\beta$ ) were presented with t-values and p-values. Statistical significance was checked at the  $\alpha = .05$  level.

## CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS

### ➤ Descriptive Statistics

In the current study, three psychological constructs were tested in a sample of 203 females aged 18-30 years (N = 203): Internalized Misogyny measured through Internalized Misogyny Scale (IMS), Gender Role Attitudes measured through Attitudes Towards Women Scale (AWS), and the Self- Esteem measured through Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Table 1 contains the descriptive statistics of all three Variables.

The IMS for Internalized Misogyny produced a mean score of  $M = 47.0$  ( $SD = 17.7$ ) with a range of scores ranging between 17 and 73 which implies mediocre differences among the participants in terms of misogyny internalization. The skewness of distribution was moderate and positive (skewness = 0.14).

The score range of the AWS for Gender Role Attitudes was 15-40, and the mean score was  $M = 24.8$  ( $SD = 7.40$ ) (skew = 0.66) which is a weak positive skew but can be analyzed. A higher blast on the AWS shows more egalitarian attitudes to women and this implies that the respondents were moderately egalitarian in their views on average.

The RSES for Self- Esteem had a mean of  $M = 29.2$  ( $SD = 5.00$ ) having a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 40 (skewness = 0.07). The average value of RSE is almost average in terms of values and indicates moderate self-esteem among the sample.

The normality of distribution of scores of all three scales was tested before determining the type of statistical tests to be applied, through the Shapiro-Wilk test. The Shapiro-Wilk test is considered to be one of the strongest tests to check the normality especially when the sample size is less than 2,000 (Razali and Wah, 2011). The result statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) implies that the assumption of normality is violated.

The Shapiro-Wilk test, as shown in Table 1, demonstrated that scores in all three scales were not normally distributed: IMS ( $W = 0.895, p < .001$ ), AWS ( $W = 0.891, p < .001$ ), and RSES ( $W = 0.955, p < .001$ ). As the p-values of all the three variables were significantly lower than the .05 level, the normality assumption was not met.

As a result, all further analyses were done using non-parametric statistical tests. In particular, the rank-order correlation (rho) developed by Spearman was employed instead of the Pearson correlation, which does not assume normality and is not sensitive to non-normality distributions. Such a choice adheres to general methodological principles of psychological research (Field, 2018).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Internalized Misogyny, Gender Role Attitudes and Self-Esteem

	<b>Internalized Misogyny</b>	<b>Gender Role Attitudes</b>	<b>Self-Esteem</b>
N	203	203	203
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	47.0	24.8	29.2
Median	44.0	23.0	30.0
Standard deviation	17.7	7.40	5.00
Minimum	17.0	15.0	18.0
Maximum	73.0	40.0	40.0
Shapiro-Wilk W	0.895	0.891	0.954
Shapiro-Wilk p	<.001	<.001	<.001

*Note.*  $N=203$ ;  $SD =$  Standard Deviation;  $W =$  Shapiro-Wilk statistic. A significant result ( $p < .05$ ) indicates the data significantly deviates from a normal distribution.

### ➤ Correlational Analysis

Since the Shapiro Wilk test revealed that scores on all the three scales have significant deviations with regard to the normality (Table 1), the Spearman rank-order correlation was used to test the relations between internalized misogyny (IMS), attitudes toward women (AWS), and self-esteem (RSES). Spearman rho is the correct non-parametric replacement to Pearson r when the normality is not possible. Table 2 shows the results.

- *Relationship Between Internalized Misogyny and Self-Esteem*

The IMS scores and RSES scores had a strong and statistically significant negative correlation,  $r_s(201) = -0.633, p < .001$  (see Table 2). It means that women with more internalized misogyny were more likely to report a low self-esteem. This conclusion is in line with theoretical models that argue that internalization of negative messages on women in the society negatively affects psychological health and self-esteem.

• *Relationship Between Gender Role Attitudes and Self-Esteem*

There was a statistically significant negative medium correlation between AWS and RSES scores,  $r_s(201) = -0.425, p < .001$  (see Table 2). This implies that those women who had a more traditional (less egalitarian) attitude towards women also had a tendency of reporting less self-esteem. This correlation is not as strong as when Internalized Misogyny is compared with Self-Esteem, but still, it is practically significant and statistically strong.

Table 2 Spearman’s Correlation Coefficients Between Internalized Misogyny, Gender Role Attitudes and Self-Esteem

Variable	1	2	3
1. Internalized Misogyny			
2. Gender Role Attitudes			
3. Self-Esteem	-0.633***	-0.425***	

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ;  $df = 201$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

➤ *Linear Regression Analysis*

In order to test the degree to which Internalized Misogyny (measured using IMS) and Gender Role Attitudes (measured using AWS) were predictors of Self-Esteem (measured using RSES), multiple regression analysis was implemented. Self-Esteem was the dependent variable, and Internalized Misogyny and Gender Role Attitudes were typed as the predictors at the same time.

• *Model Fit*

The general regression model was statistically meaningful and accounted for a large percentage of the variation in self-esteem. The model yielded  $R = 0.639, R^2 = 0.408$  and Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.402$  (see Table 3). This implies that the combined contribution of Internalized Misogyny and Gender Role Attitudes to the variance of Self-Esteem scores ( $N = 203$ ) was 40.8 percent, which is enormous based on the conventions of Cohen (1988).

• *Regression Coefficient*

Analysis of the single predictors showed that Internalized Misogyny was an important predictor of Self-Esteem scores ( $t = -8.812, p < 0.001, \beta = -0.648$ ) (see Table 3, Model 1). The standardized beta of -0.648 means that an increase in the internalized misogyny by one standard deviation reduced self-esteem by 0.648 standard deviations, which is big and has a practical value.

However, the opposite was found, where Gender Role Attitudes did not significantly predict Self-Esteem when Internalized Misogyny was introduced in the model ( $t = 0.187, p = .852, \beta = 0.014$ ) (see Table 3, Model 2). This implies that when the variance due to Internalized Misogyny has been added, Gender Role Attitudes do not add predictive validity to Self-Esteem. This observation suggests that Internalized Misogyny is the more proximate and personally relevant predictor of Self-Esteem than the larger attitudinal-level measure that is reflected by Gender Role Attitudes.

Table 3 Regression Analysis Summary and Coefficients for the Prediction of Self-Esteem from Internalized Misogyny and Gender Role Attitudes

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change (Stepwise)	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	t	F	p
Model 1	.64	.41	.41	.40	-.65	-8.812	77.65	< .001
Model 2	.64	.41	.00	.40	.01	0.19	68.88	.852

Note. Models estimated using sample size  $N = 203$ .  $R =$  multiple correlation coefficient;  $R^2 =$  coefficient of determination; Adjusted  $R^2 = R^2$  adjusted for number of predictors;  $\beta =$  standardized coefficient;  $F$  values estimated from  $t^2$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

➤ *Summary of Findings*

The findings of the current research give coherent evidence in relation to the hypothesized correlations among Internalized Misogyny, Gender Role Attitudes and Self-Esteem among young Indian women. Specifically:

First, descriptive statistics indicated moderate scores in Internalized Misogyny ( $M = 47.0$ ), moderately egalitarian Gender Role Attitudes ( $M = 24.8$ ) and average levels of Self-Esteem ( $M = 29.2$ ) in the sample.

Second, Shapiro-Wilk tests were used to ensure that scores of all three scales were not distributed normally (all  $p < .001$ ) and this is the reason why non-parametric tests were used in the whole analysis.

Third, the correlation analysis by Spearman revealed that there exists a strong negative relationship between Internalized Misogyny and Self-Esteem ( $r_s = -0.633, p < .001$ ) and a moderate negative relationship between the Gender Role Attitudes to Self-Esteem ( $r_s = -0.425, p < .001$ ) which were highly significant.

Fourth, the multiple linear regression suggested that the overall model explained 40.8 percent of the variance in Self-Esteem ( $R^2 = 0.408$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.402$ ). More importantly, Internalized Misogyny was the only significant unique predictor ( $\beta = -0.648$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and Gender Role Attitudes did not have any significant contribution to the variance explained by Internalized Misogyny ( $\beta = 0.014$ ,  $p = .852$ ).

These results highlight the key role of Internalized Misogyny - internalization of societal sexism against oneself - in development of Self-Esteem in young women and imply that an intervention that focuses on internalized misogyny could be especially useful in promoting the psychological well-being of such groups.

- *Hypothesis Testing:*

The correlation and regression analyses revealed that Hypotheses 1 and 2 were accepted, and the Internalized Misogyny ( $rs = -0.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and traditional Gender Role Attitudes ( $rs = -0.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ) have negative relationships with Self-Esteem, whereas Hypothesis 3 was partially accepted as the regression model ( $R^2 = .408$ ) was significant, but only the Internalized Misogyny ( $\beta = -0.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ) emerged as a unique predictor.

## CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION

### ➤ *Overview of Findings*

The current research aimed at exploring the connections between Internalized Misogyny (measure using IMS) and Gender Role Attitudes (measure using AWS) and Self-Esteem (measure using RSES) of a sample of 203 young Indian women between the ages of 18 and 30 years. Three substantive results were obtained: strong negative relation between Internalized Misogyny and Self-Esteem, medium negative relation between Gender Role Attitudes and Self-Esteem, and regression model that showed that Internalized Misogyny was the only significant predictor of Self-Esteem when the two variables were entered together, with a regression model explaining about 40.8 percent of the variance. Such findings are analyzed in the frameworks of the available theoretical frameworks and empirical literature, paying specific attention to convergence, divergence, and novelty areas, and then a critical review of the limitations of the study is presented.

- *Internalized Misogyny and Self-Esteem: Agreement with Existing Literature:*

The strongest result of this paper is that there is a strong negative correlation between Internalized Misogyny and Self-Esteem ( $rs = -.0.633, p < .001$ ), which can be found in the vast amount of existing literature. In one of the earlier systematic studies of this construct, Cowan et al. (1998) determined that, personal and collective Self-Esteem of women were negatively related with Internalized Misogyny; the study found that women who harbored greater levels of internalized misogyny perceived themselves to be dissimilar to other women, a fragmentation of group identity which, according to the authors, were used to erode the self-concept of women. Most recently, Evteeva (2024) performed a synthesis of the literature and found consistent and negative correlations between Internalized Misogyny and positive psychological functioning, self-efficacy, and Self-Esteem in diverse samples of women worldwide. The obtained effect size of  $rs = -.0.633$  is quite strong and is similar to the magnitude of associations that are found in western samples, so this psychological dynamic might not be limited by culture, which is an especially important observation in the absence of much research that is carried out in the South Asian context.

Theoretically, such results are deeply rooted into the Feminist Therapy Theory by Worell and Remer (1996), which suggests that women that internalize the negative messages targeted at their gender have a high likelihood of having low psychological wellbeing, as internalization of the negative messages targeted at self is one of the forms of self-directed oppression. This framework was further developed by Szymanski et al. (2009) who empirically showed that the influence of external sexist events on psychological distress is magnified by Internalized Misogyny which is a moderating variable that exacerbates the psychological damage of structural inequality. The current results support this hypothetical stance: in cases when women embrace ideologies that disparage their respective gender, such ideologies seem to be directed at themselves in a reflex mode, negating their personal value. This process is more or less logical to what David and Okazaki (2006) have termed as internalized oppression- the psychological process by which individuals in the marginalized groups internalize and recreate the negative messages that the social environment is sending them.

The present research can also be seen as related to the System Justification Theory of Jost and colleagues (Jost et al., 2004; Jost and Kay, 2005) according to which the representatives of the low-status groups (including women in a patriarchal society) are most likely to support ideologies that justify the same system that oppresses them. Although these system-justifying cognitions provide temporary psychological deflection, by alleviating cognitive dissonance, these cognitions are theorized to have long-term costs to the self-esteem and wellbeing of those who possess them (Jost and Hunyady, 2003). The high level of Internalized Misogyny and Self-Esteem correlation here could be the actual representation of such a dynamic: by internalizing the misogynistic beliefs, women promote their subservient position, thus undermining their self-assessments. The psychological functioning of violence against women as examined by the System Justification perspective by Antmen (2023) also had the outcome that the support of gender-hierarchical ideologies was detrimental to the psychological functioning of women who endorsed them, which fits the theoretical assumption that the self-directed endorsement of patriarchal norms incurs psychological costs.

- *Attitudes Toward Women and Self-Esteem: A Nuanced Discourse:*

The moderate negative relationship between AWS scores and RSES scores ( $rs = -.0.425, p < .001$ ) was significant though significantly less strong than the relationship between Internalized Misogyny and Self-Esteem. This trend has a theoretical interpretation. Spence and Helmreich (1972) developed the AWS, which is more of an externalized and socially-oriented construct of attitudes towards the rights and role of a woman in society, and the Internalized Misogyny is a measure of the extent to which a woman has internalized negative beliefs about herself as a woman. The dissimilarity of the strength of these correlations is therefore an indication that it is the personal, self-referential aspect of Internalized Misogyny and not attitudinal sexism per se which has the most powerful effect of undermining Self-Esteem. This is in line with the conceptual difference that Glick and Fiske (1997) made in their theory of Ambivalent Sexism about the difference between attitudes outward (to the social group of women) and those that are internalized to a woman's self-concept.

Nevertheless, the considerable Gender Role Attitudes and Self-Esteem correlation, albeit minor, cannot be ignored. In a study on sexist attitudes and Self-Esteem of adolescents of both sexes, Morales-Vives et al. (2024) discovered that people with more

conservative sexist attitudes, namely benevolent sexism, had lower Self-Esteem on the RSE, indicating that even non-completely internalized attitudinal sexism can have a quantifiable depreciating effect on self-worth. In the Indian context more specifically, a study by Jha and Srivastava (2024) of working urban Indian women who used the IMS found that Internalized Misogyny was a significant predictor of career choices made in accordance with traditional gender norms, which is also in line with the notion that internalized and attitudinal forms of sexism, in turn, limit the sense of agency and self-determination of women, which in turn are established antecedents of Self-Esteem (Bandura, 1977).

- *IMS as the Dominant Predictor: Theoretical Implications*

The most theoretically important finding of this study is perhaps the regression result: when Internalized Misogyny and Gender Role Attitudes were both entered as predictors of Self-Esteem, Internalized Misogyny was the only significant predictor ( $\beta = -0.648$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and Gender Role Attitudes did not add unique variance ( $\beta = 0.014$ ,  $p = .852$ ). The result has significant implications to the conceptualization of the connection between Internalized Misogyny and psychological health in women by researchers and clinicians.

The one interesting interpretation is that the influence of traditional attitudes toward women on Self-Esteem is all mediated by, or subsumed by, the mechanism of internalization. That is, the psychologically expensive aspect of holding onto traditional attitudes concerning the role of women does not exist unless those attitudes have been assumed as self-beliefs. This aligns with the theoretical differentiation described by Means (2021) between women who demonstrate bias against women in a psychologically detached and exceptionalist way (they do not think of themselves as other women), and women who actually internalize negative self-directed beliefs. The former group can have traditional attitudes that have no significant impact on their Self-Esteem, and the latter group experience the direct effects of self-evaluation. This interpretation is also consistent with the result of Moradi and Subich (2004) which found that the women most affected by the occurrence of sexist incidences are those who have learned negative beliefs about their gender as opposed to those who perceive the occurrence of sexism as a societal occurrence.

- *Cultural Context: Implications in the Indian Setting:*

The current research is a rare empiric entry in the Indian context where there have been few systematic studies of quantitative data on Internalized Misogyny and its psychological effects among young women. The average Internalized Misogyny score of this sample ( $M = 47.0$  out of a potential 119) indicates that, although moderate scores of Internalized Misogyny were noted, most of the respondents were not at extreme points of the scale. This trend can be indicative of the education level of the sample, the vast majority of which were undergraduate and postgraduate students, who could have received some buffer of feminist discourse and higher education against the total internalization of patriarchal norms, which has been observed in Western samples by Schwabe (2024) who found feminist identification was negatively linked to internalized sexism.

However, the Internalized Misogyny and Self-Esteem correlation in this Indian sample is remarkably close to the one found in Western literature, which indicates that the psychological mechanism of Internalized Misogyny to low Self-Esteem is equally strong in cultures with comparable levels of externalization. This is an important finding since it dispels any notion that psychological damage of Internalized Misogyny is culture-specific or less applicable in collectivist societies in which gender hierarchy might be more normative. In their qualitative exploration of the experiences of benevolent sexism in the workplace, which they carried out with Indian women, Singh and Radhakrishnan (2025) discovered that even more subtle and seemingly benign forms of sexism had an insidious and limiting impact on the professional self-concept of women - a result that places the current findings into the perspective of a larger context of gendered experience in Indian society.

- *Critical Appraisal of Theoretical Framework*

Even though the current results are highly encouraging in the light of the Feminist Therapy Theory, as well as the System Justification Theory predictions, they are also prompting theoretical improvement. An example of these is the System Justification Theory, which proposes that the short-term palliative effect of endorsing system-justifying beliefs such as gender-hierarchical ideologies is positive but appears to be temporary in both members of disadvantaged groups (Jost & Hunyady, 2003). The current cross-sectional study cannot be used to measure this temporal dynamic, and it is conceivable that, of some others, compliance with conventional gender attitudes can be connected to less than increased psychological distress in the short-term. Competing predictions require future longitudinal studies in order to separate them.

Moreover, the current research operationalized Self-Esteem with the help of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, a global, unidimensional measure, but recent theoretical models differentiated between secure and fragile Self-Esteem, with fragile Self-Esteem being defined by a clear-lurky discrepancy in self-assessment (Kernis et al., 2000; Jackson et al., 2022).

- *Hypothesis Testing*

The results of the research give clear empirical data concerning the hypotheses of the relationship between internalized gender dynamics and psychological well-being. Hypothesis 1 that postulated the existence of a significant relationship between Internalized Misogyny and Self-Esteem was proven to be true. The statistical results showed a very high negative relationship ( $r_s = -0.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ) indicating that the more a woman is inculcated with a higher number of restrictive or negative beliefs about her gender, the lower the global understanding of her own worth is.

Likewise, Hypothesis 2 was also supported with the traditional Gender Role Attitudes indicating a moderate negative relationship with Self-Esteem ( $r_s = -0.43, p < .001$ ). But the outcomes of Hypothesis 3, which assumed that both variables would have a unique and independent effect on Self-Esteem, were more subtle and, therefore, partially accurate. Although the entire regression model was found to be statistically significant in explaining a significant amount of variance in Self-Esteem ( $R^2 = .408$ ) of 40.8 percent, Internalized Misogyny was found to be the only unique predictor ( $b = -0.65, p < .001$ ).

#### ➤ *Limitations of the Present Study*

There are some significant constraints to be taken into consideration. To start with, by the cross-sectional nature of the present research, causal inference is not possible. Although the correlational and regression results are in line with the hypothesis that Internalized Misogyny negatively affects Self-Esteem, it is also possible that women who have lower Self-Esteem are more prone to internalizing misogynistic beliefs, or that the two variables are jointly predicted by an unmeasured third variable to determine directionality they require longitudinal designs or preferably experimental or intervention-based studies.

Second, the sample size consisted of educated and urban young females, which restricts the generalizability of the results to the rest of the female population in India. The rural women, those of lower socioeconomic status, or lower educational levels may have elevated levels of Internalized Misogyny and worse outcomes of Self-Esteem due to stricter normative contexts in which they may reside. The average moderate Internalized Misogyny score which has been measured in the current sample can subsequently fail to capture the extent of the phenomenon at population level. In future studies, there should be the adoption of the sampling that is assumed to reflect the population and socioeconomic diversity in India.

Third, the IMS and the AWS are both self-reports, which are vulnerable to social desirability. There is a possibility of socially undesirable attitudes being underreported by the participants, especially in an academic environment where gender equality norms have a high likelihood of being well-known. This limitation was pointed out by Means (2021), specifically in regard to the IMS where women might not be eager to support objects that explicitly support negative attitudes towards their gender even though they might actually believe such attitudes at an implicit level. Fourth, the research analyzed Self-Esteem as a psychological outcome only. Internalized misogyny has been associated with a far greater number of effects by a growing body of research addressing the importance of Internalized Misogyny in depression, anxiety, self-objectification, disordered eating, and reduced career aspirations (Szymanski et al., 2009; Jha et al., 2024; Erenoglu et al., 2023).

#### ➤ *Implications and Future Directions*

Despite such limitations, the current results have significant implications on theory and practice. In clinical practice, the close relationship between Internalized Misogyny and Self-Esteem indicates that practitioners that deal with young Indian women who present with the complaints of low Self-Esteem or other complications should consider assessing the presence of internalized misogynistic beliefs as one of the factors that could contribute significantly to the situation. Psychoeducational programs that increase critical awareness of the way patriarchal messages work and how they can be internalized by women can become a useful part of individual therapy and mental health programmed on the campuses.

To researchers, the observation that Gender Role Attitudes failed to predict Self-Esteem independently when Internalized Misogyny was included is an indication that the internalized aspect of sexism should be measured instead of attitudinal scales being used alone in research on psychological wellbeing. The Indian context is justified in efforts to develop scales: the current scales like the IMS were made with a Western sample, and the cross-cultural validation research, especially of the linguistically and sociocultural diverse Indian population, is a noteworthy priority. A recent study done by Ertl and colleagues (2025) on the creation of new Misogyny Internalization Measure (MIM) with better psychometric properties and invariance in the measure across race and ethnicity offers a good example of this kind of work.

## CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how Internalized Misogyny and Gender Role Attitudes relate to Self-Esteem among young Indian women, and the findings tell a fairly clear story. The strong negative correlation between IMS and RSES scores ( $r_s = -0.633$ ,  $p < .001$ ) confirms that when women absorb and direct inward the sexist messages their social environment produces, their sense of personal worth takes a measurable and significant hit (Szymanski et al., 2009). The moderate negative correlation between AWS and RSES scores ( $r_s = -0.425$ ,  $p < .001$ ) adds another layer, suggesting that even attitudinal sexism, the kind that governs how a woman thinks about the roles and rights of women broadly, carries a psychological cost (Spence & Helmreich, 1972). But the regression analysis is where the findings become most theoretically interesting. When both variables were entered together, Internalized Misogyny accounted for 40.8% of the variance in Self-Esteem ( $R^2 = .408$ ) and emerged as the sole significant unique predictor ( $\beta = -0.648$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while Gender Role Attitudes contributed nothing additional ( $\beta = 0.014$ ,  $p = .852$ ). This is not a trivial distinction. It suggests that the psychologically damaging element of sexism is not the abstract belief that women should be confined to domestic roles, but the moment a woman turns that belief inward and applies it to herself specifically. A woman can hold traditional attitudes about gender and still maintain her Self-Esteem if she exempts herself from those standards, viewing herself as an exception rather than the rule (Means, 2021). The real damage, as the data indicate, happens when those standards become self-referential. This finding resonates with what Jost and Hunyady (2003) described as the long-term psychological cost of system-justifying beliefs, and with Cowan et al. (1998), who found that Internalized Misogyny erodes group identification and fragments the self-concept of women in ways that attitudinal measures simply do not capture. In an Indian context, where patriarchal norms are frequently normalized under the guise of tradition or family values, this mechanism may be especially invisible and therefore especially difficult to resist (Singh & Radhakrishnan, 2025).

The practical implications of these findings extend well beyond academic debate. For clinicians working with young Indian women who present with persistent self-doubt, chronic underachievement relative to their actual ability, or the kind of quiet self-erasure that rarely gets named in therapy rooms, assessing for Internalized Misogyny is not optional. It should be part of the intake conversation. Psychoeducational interventions that help women trace the origins of their self-critical inner voice, connecting it to broader patriarchal messaging rather than personal failing, have real potential as tools for therapeutic change (Worell & Remer, 1996). Campus mental health programs in Indian universities are a natural setting for this kind of work, particularly given that the sample here consisted largely of educated urban women who, despite some exposure to feminist discourse, still demonstrated a meaningful link between Internalized Misogyny and diminished self-worth (Schwabe, 2024). That finding alone should prompt some reflection. Higher education is not a sufficient buffer. Awareness of gender inequality at an intellectual level is not the same as being free of its psychological grip. Future research should pursue longitudinal designs to establish directionality, since the cross-sectional nature of this study cannot rule out the possibility that low self-esteem makes women more vulnerable to internalizing misogynistic beliefs rather than the other way around (Szymanski et al., 2009). Culturally adapted measurement tools, developed and validated with diverse Indian samples rather than borrowed wholesale from Western contexts, are also a necessary next step (Ertl et al., 2025). What this study ultimately demonstrates is that the most persistent form of gendered oppression may be the one that requires no external enforcement at all, because women have already been conditioned to carry it inward, apply it to themselves, and call it their own failing (David & Okazaki, 2006; Jost et al., 2004).

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**APPENDIX**

**APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE**

INTERNALISED MISOGYNY SCALE

Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree by selecting (✓) the option that best reflects your views, using the scale below:

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Something in the middle
- Slightly agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Nº		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Women exaggerate problems they have at work							
2	Women are too easily offended							
3	Women seek to gain power by getting control over men							
4	When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against							
5	It is generally safer not to trust women too much							
6	When it comes down to it a lot of women are deceitful							
7	I think that most women would lie just to get ahead							
8	I am sure I get a raw deal from other women in my life							
9	Sometimes other women bother me by just being around							
10	I believe that most women tell the truth							
11	When I am in a group consisting of equal numbers of men and women and a woman dominates the conversation I feel uncomfortable							
12	I am uncomfortable when I hear a woman speaking with authority on male dominated topics such as football or horseracing							
13	I prefer to listen to male radio announcers than female							
14	The intellectual leadership of a community should be largely in the hands of men							
15	I prefer to work for a male boss							
16	If I were to beat another woman for a job I would feel more satisfied than if I beat a man							
17	Generally, I prefer to work with men							

### ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN SCALE (SPENCE & HELMREICH, 1978)

#### Instructions:

The statements listed below describe attitudes toward the roles of women in society which different people have. There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions. You are asked to express your feeling about each statement by indicating whether you (A) agree strongly, (B) agree mildly, (C) disagree mildly, or (D) disagree strongly.

1. Swearing and obscenity are more repulsive in the speech of a woman than a man.

A	B	C	D
Agree strongly	Agree mildly	Disagree mildly	Disagree strongly

- 2.\* Under modern economic conditions with women being active outside the home, men should share in household tasks such as washing dishes and doing laundry.

A	B	C	D
Agree strongly	Agree mildly	Disagree mildly	Disagree strongly

- 3.\* It is insulting to women to have the "obey" clause remain in the marriage service.

A	B	C	D
Agree strongly	Agree mildly	Disagree mildly	Disagree strongly

- 4.\* A woman should be free as a man to propose marriage.

A	B	C	D
Agree strongly	Agree mildly	Disagree mildly	Disagree strongly

5. Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers.

A	B	C	D
Agree strongly	Agree mildly	Disagree mildly	Disagree strongly

- 6.\* Women should assume their rightful place in business and all the professions along with men.

A	B	C	D
Agree strongly	Agree mildly	Disagree mildly	Disagree strongly

7. A woman should not expect to go to exactly the same places or to have quite the same freedom of action as a man.

A	B	C	D
Agree strongly	Agree mildly	Disagree mildly	Disagree strongly

8. It is ridiculous for a woman to run a locomotive and for a man to darn socks.

A
B
C
D  
 Agree strongly    Agree mildly    Disagree mildly    Disagree strongly

9. The intellectual leadership of a community should be largely in the hands of men.

A
B
C
D  
 Agree strongly    Agree mildly    Disagree mildly    Disagree strongly

10.\* Women should be given equal opportunity with men for apprenticeship in the various trades.

A
B
C
D  
 Agree strongly    Agree mildly    Disagree mildly    Disagree strongly

11.\* Women earning as much as their dates should bear equally the expense when they go out together.

A
B
C
D  
 Agree strongly    Agree mildly    Disagree mildly    Disagree strongly

12. Sons in a family should be given more encouragement to go to college than daughters

A
B
C
D  
 Agree strongly    Agree mildly    Disagree mildly    Disagree strongly

13. In general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in the bringing up of the children.

A
B
C
D  
 Agree strongly    Agree mildly    Disagree mildly    Disagree strongly

14.\* Economic and social freedom is worth far more to women than acceptance of the ideal of femininity which has been set up by men.

A
B
C
D  
 Agree strongly    Agree mildly    Disagree mildly    Disagree strongly

15. There are many jobs in which men should be given preference over women in being hired or promoted.

A
B
C
D  
 Agree strongly    Agree mildly    Disagree mildly    Disagree strongly

### Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)

Please record the appropriate answer for each item, depending on whether you Strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

- On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
- At times I think I am no good at all.
- I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- I am able to do things as well as most other people.
- I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
- I certainly feel useless at times.
- I feel that I'm a person of worth.
- I wish I could have more respect for myself.
- All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.
- I take a positive attitude toward myself.

If you have any questions, concerns, or require further information, you may contact:

- ✓ Researcher Email: [jahnvi.shrivastava21@gmail.com](mailto:jahnvi.shrivastava21@gmail.com)
- ✓ Department: Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences

Thank you so much for your valuable time and participation.

Your contribution is sincerely appreciated.

**APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SHEET****INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

Title of the Study- Impact of Internalized Misogyny and Gender Role Attitudes on Self-Esteem in Young Adult Women

Hello Everyone!

Thank you for taking the time to read this and for considering participation in this research study.

I am Jahnvi Shrivastava, an undergraduate student pursuing a B.A. (Honours/Research) in Applied Psychology. I am conducting this research as part of my undergraduate research dissertation, under the supervision of Dr. Mamata Mahapatra, Professor, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences.

The purpose of this study is to understand how internalized misogyny and gender role attitudes impact self-esteem in young adult women. By exploring these experiences, this research aims to contribute to a better understanding of women's psychological well-being and social influences on self-perception.

You are welcome to take part in this study if you identify as a woman and are between 18 and 30 years of age. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a self-report questionnaire that will take about 10–15 minutes. The questions focus on your attitudes, beliefs and personal experiences related to gender and self-esteem.

There are no right or wrong answers—your honest responses are what truly matter. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and you are free to stop at any point or choose not to participate at all. All responses will remain anonymous and confidential. No identifying information will be used in any report, publication or academic presentation. The data collected will be used strictly for research purposes.

**Participant Details**

- Name (Initials): \_\_\_\_\_
- Age: \_\_\_\_\_
- Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Informed Consent- By proceeding with this questionnaire (✓), you confirm that you have read and understood the information provided above, meet the eligibility criteria, and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I provide my informed consent to participate in this research.