

Self-Esteem of Secondary School Teachers: A Study in Relation to Sex, Age and Academic Achievement

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Abstract: The present study examined the self-esteem of secondary school teachers in relation to sex, age, and academic achievement. The present study examined whether there were significant differences in self-esteem between male and female teachers across age groups and between teachers with high and low academic achievement. A descriptive survey method was used, and a total of 806 secondary school teachers (339 males and 467 females), comprising 250 government and 556 private school teachers, were selected through multistage random sampling from the secondary schools of Imphal West District, Manipur, India. The mean age of the respondents was 38.79 years (SD = 9.80). The data were collected using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES, 1965), a 10-item, four-point Likert-type scale that showed internal consistency reliability of 0.85 to 0.88 and Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87 for the entire scale. Self-esteem did not differ significantly between male and female teachers ($p = 0.231$). However, the young teachers had significantly higher self-esteem than the old teachers ($p = 0.012$). Also, teachers with higher academic achievement had significantly higher self-esteem than those with lower academic achievement ($p = 0.015$). In conclusion, sex had no significant effect on teachers' self-esteem, while age and academic achievement were significant correlates. These findings contribute to the body of knowledge on correlates of teachers' self-esteem and have implications for teacher development, educational policy, and professional well-being. There is a need for further studies with larger and more diverse samples to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Secondary School, Teachers, Sex, Age, Academic Achievement Difference.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem is one of the most studied variables in psychology and education due to its significant influence on personality, behavior, motivation, and overall well-being. It is the estimation of a person regarding his or her own worth, competence, and value. Colman (2008) defines self-esteem as an individual's attitude toward himself or herself or one's evaluation of himself or herself, which can be positive, neutral, or negative. Rosenberg (1965) defined self-esteem as a positive or negative attitude toward the self and regarded it as the evaluative component of self-concept. James (1893) defined self-esteem as the ratio of achievements to aspirations. He proposed that self-esteem rises with success and falls with failure. Blascovich and Tomaka (1991) defined self-esteem as

an individual's sense of personal worth and the degree to which a person values, approves of, and appreciates the self.

Many psychologists have commented on the developmental and dynamic nature of self-esteem. Coopersmith (1967, 1981) defined self-esteem as the evaluation and affective components of the evaluation that people make and maintain of themselves through their interactions with significant others and social experiences. Self-esteem is a fundamental human need and was described by Branden (1969, 1994) as confidence in our ability to cope with life's challenges and the conviction that we are worthy of happiness, success, and respect. He said six pillars form the foundation of healthy self-esteem: conscious living, self-acceptance, self-responsibility, self-assertiveness, purposeful living, and personal integrity. Mruk (1999) also defined self-esteem as the

experience of competence and worthiness and noted that it is a dynamic and ever-changing phenomenon influenced by cognitive, emotional, and behavioral experiences. Another important indicator of mental well-being is self-esteem (Alexander, 2001). He made a distinction between two types of self-esteem. Trait self-esteem is the confidence in particular domains, whereas global self-esteem is an individual's intrinsic sense of worth.

Self-esteem is important not only for individual adjustment but also for mental health, academic achievement, occupational competence, and social relationships. Maslow (1987) considered self-esteem one of the important human needs and argued that people with healthy self-esteem have greater confidence, independence, problem-solving ability, and emotional stability. Conversely, people with low self-esteem tend to be overcritical of themselves, overly sensitive to criticism, chronically indecisive, afraid of failure, and less motivated (Branden, 1994). Previous research has consistently demonstrated that self-esteem is a significant predictor of psychological well-being and social adjustment. Davis (2001) described self-esteem as a "social vaccine" that can protect people from a range of social problems, such as substance abuse, violence, school failure, and delinquency. White (2002) argued that many non-biological personal and social problems have roots in poor self-esteem. Emler (2001) also reported that people with low self-esteem are more prone to depression, unemployment, eating disorders, suicidal tendencies, victimization, and difficulties in establishing successful interpersonal relationships.

In the educational setting, teachers' self-esteem plays an important role in determining the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers with high self-esteem are more confident, motivated, emotionally stable, and effective in managing classroom and instructional practices. Research by Crane (1947), Jersild (1955), and Doherty (1980) has found that teachers with high self-esteem experience less stress, better physical and psychological health, and greater professional satisfaction. Moreover, teacher self-esteem positively affects students' self-esteem, motivation, and academic achievement. Mustaq et al. (2012) stressed that teachers with healthy self-esteem can better support students with learning difficulties, encourage them to ask questions, provide positive learning experiences, and create classroom environments where mistakes are perceived as opportunities to learn rather than failures.

Another important indicator of teachers' professional competence is academic achievement. Teachers with better academic backgrounds are expected to have more subject knowledge, instructional competence, confidence, and professional commitment. These qualities may positively contribute to their self-esteem. At the same time, demographic variables such as sex and age have often been investigated as possible determinants of self-esteem. Although previous studies have reported inconsistent findings regarding the

influence of sex and age on self-esteem, understanding these relationships remains important for teacher education, professional development, and educational policy.

Despite the considerable body of literature on self-esteem, relatively few studies have examined simultaneously the relationships between self-esteem and demographic variables (e.g., sex and age) and academic achievement among secondary school teachers in the Indian context, particularly in Manipur. The significance of exploring these relationships lies in the fact that teachers' self-esteem affects not only their professional competence but also the learning environment they establish for their students. In this context, the present study examines the self-esteem of secondary school teachers in relation to sex, age, and academic achievement and aims to explore whether significant differences in teachers' self-esteem exist across these variables and thus to contribute to a better understanding of the factors related to teachers' psychological well-being and professional effectiveness. The findings are expected to offer useful implications for teacher education programs, educational administrators, policymakers, and future research aimed at enhancing teachers' professional competence and overall well-being.

➤ *Objective*

- There is no significant difference in self-esteem between male and female secondary school teachers.
- Age is not a contributing variable to variation in self-esteem.
- There is no significant difference in self-esteem among the teachers attaining high or low academic achievement.

II. METHOD

The study used a descriptive survey research design. It was a non-experimental study in its entirety. No treatment or manipulation was given to the independent variables. The study focused solely on examining differences in self-esteem among secondary school teachers by academic achievement. The study was designed to compare the self-esteem of teachers with high and low academic achievement without influencing or altering the study's variables. The selected respondents were given data through a descriptive survey method. The method allows for the systematic collection of data using a standard, appropriate research instrument for the study. The method used was suitable for describing the current state of affairs and investigating differences in the study subjects' self-esteem.

➤ *Population and Sample*

The present study was conducted on a sample of 806 secondary school teachers selected by a multistage random sampling technique from the secondary schools of Imphal West District, Manipur. Imphal West District is one of the nine districts of the state of Manipur, India. The sample selected was about 40% of the total population of 2015 teachers working in 191 secondary schools, comprising 46 government and 145 private schools. Among the sampled teachers, 250 teachers were from government schools and 556 teachers were from

private schools. The age of participants ranged from 23 to 55 years, with a mean age of 38.79 years and a standard deviation of 9.80 years, indicating an adequate representation of teachers from various age groups and school management.

➤ Tool and Techniques

Data for this present study were gathered by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) by Rosenberg (1965). RSES is a standardized tool that is frequently used to measure global self-esteem. It consists of 10 Likert-type questions rated on a four-point scale, including Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Five of the 10 items (2, 5, 6, 8, and 9) are positive in nature, while the other five are negative. The scale has demonstrated high reliability, with internal consistency coefficients ranging from 0.85 to 0.88 and an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.87. The RSES has been extensively validated and is widely used among a broad spectrum of populations, including teachers, adolescents, adults, older adults, and clinical populations. It has been translated into a number of languages and adapted for use in a variety of cultural settings and is one of the most widely accepted measures of global self-esteem. Owing to its psychometric properties and its widespread use in educational research, the scale was deemed appropriate for the present

study. In addition to the RSES, a Personal Information Schedule was administered to collect demographic and academic information relevant to the study variables.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data were systematically coded, tabulated, analysed, and interpreted using appropriate statistical techniques. Percentages were used to describe the distribution of respondents and to summarize the data, while the Chi-square (χ^2) test was used to assess the significance of differences and associations among the variables under investigation. These statistical techniques were considered appropriate for achieving the study's objectives and testing the formulated hypotheses.

IV. RESULTS

Ho1: There is no significant difference in self-esteem between male and female secondary school teachers.

Ho2: Age is not a contributing variable to variation in self-esteem.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in self-esteem among the teachers attaining high or low academic achievement.

Table 1: Age and Levels of Self-esteem

Age of teachers	Low self-esteem	High self-esteem	Total
Younger teachers	83 (57.6%)	411 (62.1%)	494 (61.3%)
Older teachers	61 (42.4%)	251 (37.9%)	312 (38.7%)
Total	144 (100.0%)	662 (100.0%)	806 (100.0%)

Chi-Square = 0.985; df = 1; P-value = 0.321; Remark = Insignificant

Table 1 indicates that 62.1% of the younger teachers had higher self-esteem than 37.9% of the older teachers. However, the Chi-square (χ^2) test showed no significant association between teachers' age and level of self-esteem ($p = 0.321$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, the younger teachers reported higher self-

esteem than the older teachers, but the difference was not statistically significant. This finding suggests that age was not significantly associated with self-esteem among the secondary school teachers in the study.

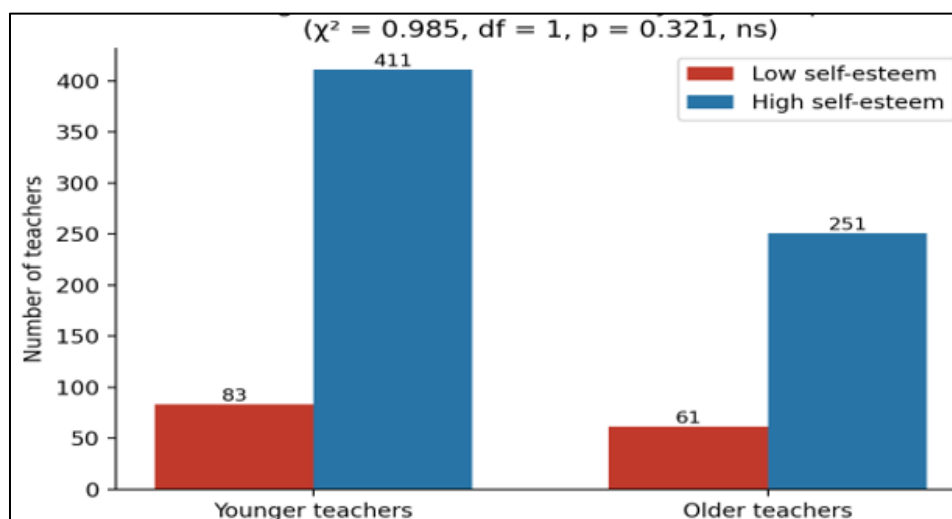


Fig 1. Self-Esteem Level of Teachers by Age Group

Table 2: Gender and Level of Self-esteem

Gender	Low self-esteem	High self-esteem	Total
Female	77 (54%)	390 (59%)	467 (58%)
Male	67 (46%)	272 (41%)	339 (42%)
Total	144 (100%)	662 (100%)	806 (100%)

Chi-Square = 1.436; df = 1; P-value = 0.231; Remark = Insignificant

Table 2 shows that 59% of the female teachers had higher self-esteem than 41% of the male teachers. However, the Chi-square (χ^2) test indicated no statistically significant association between gender and the level of self-esteem ($p = 0.231$, $p > 0.05$). Although a greater proportion of female teachers reported higher self-esteem than their male counterparts, the observed difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, it may be concluded that gender did not significantly influence the self-esteem of secondary school teachers in the present study.

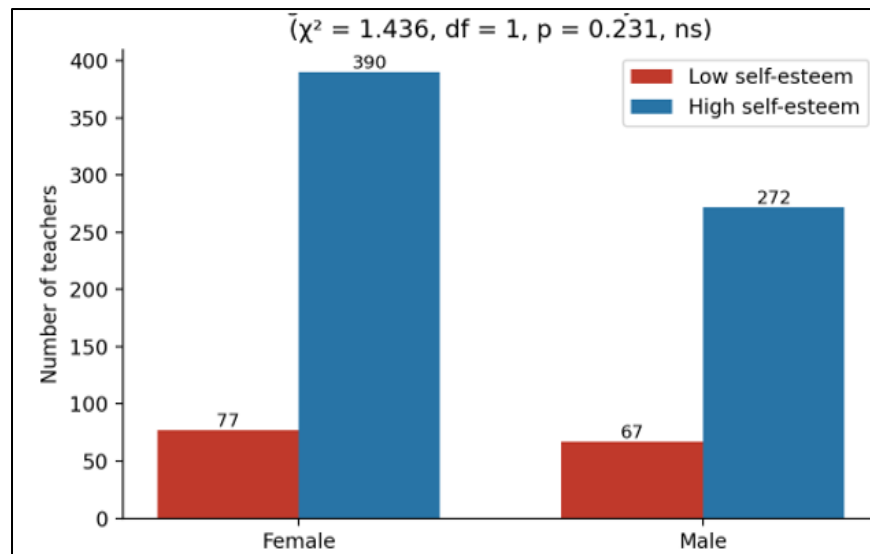


Fig 2. Self-Esteem Level of Teachers by Gender

Table 3: Academic Achievement and Self-Esteem of Teachers

Educational Qualification	Low self-esteem	High self-esteem	Total
Graduate	68 (47%)	262 (40%)	333 (41%)
Graduated with B.Ed./M.Ed.	9 (6%)	49 (7%)	58 (7%)
Post Graduate	52 (36%)	207 (31%)	259 (32%)
Post Graduate with B.Ed./M.Ed.	15 (11%)	144 (22%)	159 (20%)
Total	144 (100%)	662 (100%)	806 (100%)

Chi-Square = 10.473; df = 3; P-value = 0.015; Remark = Significant

Table 3 shows that among teachers with high self-esteem, the largest proportion (40%) were graduates, followed by postgraduates (31%), while the smallest proportion (7%) comprised teachers with graduate qualifications, including B.Ed./M.Ed. Similarly, among teachers with low self-esteem, the highest proportion (47%) were graduates, followed by postgraduates (36%), whereas the lowest proportion (6%) consisted of teachers holding graduate qualifications with B.Ed./M.Ed. The Chi-square (χ^2) test revealed a statistically significant association between teachers' educational qualifications and their self-esteem levels ($\chi^2 = 4.86$, $p = 0.015$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings indicate that teachers' educational qualifications are significantly associated with their self-esteem levels. Specifically, teachers with graduate qualifications constituted the largest proportion of those exhibiting higher self-esteem compared with the other educational qualification categories.

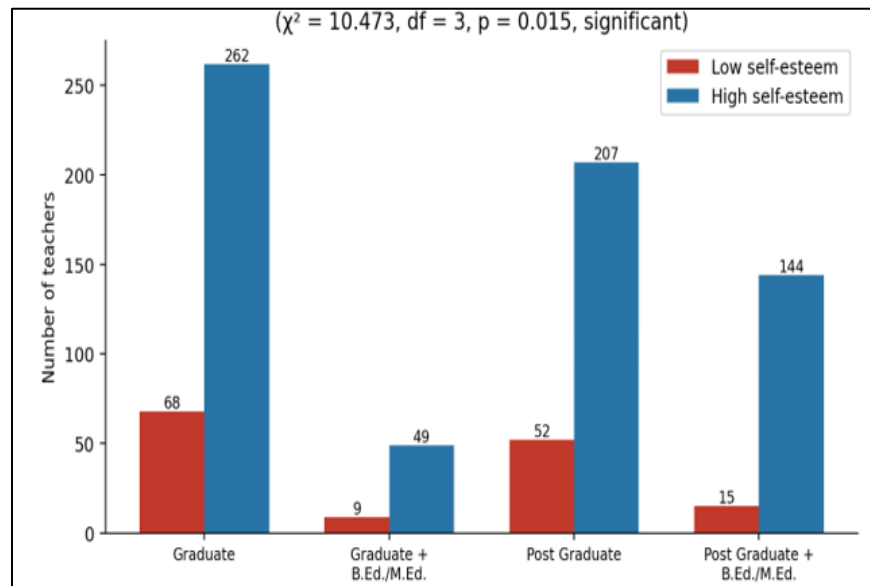


Fig 3. Self-Esteem Level of Teachers by Educational Qualification

V. DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between self-esteem and gender, age, and educational qualifications (academic achievement) among secondary school teachers. The results revealed no statistically significant difference in self-esteem between male and female teachers ($p = 0.231$). Therefore, the first null hypothesis was accepted. The findings of the study are consistent with the findings of Mishra (2013), who reported no significant difference in gender in self-esteem among secondary school teachers of Gangtok, East Sikkim, and Shah and Pathak (2014), who also reported no significant difference in self-esteem between male and female secondary and higher secondary school teachers. Similarly, Haokip et al. (2014) found no significant difference in self-esteem between male and female Kuki adults in Churachandpur District, Manipur. However, the present finding contradicts the findings of Tabassum et al. (n.d.). The study revealed a significant difference in professional self-esteem between public and private secondary school teachers in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, with public school teachers having higher self-esteem than their counterparts in private schools. These variations may be due to differences in socio-cultural settings, institutional environments, and characteristics of the study populations.

The study also showed a significant age difference in self-esteem, with younger teachers having higher self-esteem than older teachers ($p = 0.012$). As such, the second null hypothesis was rejected. This finding is consistent with the study by Haokip et al. (2014), which also reported significantly higher self-esteem among younger Kuki adults than among older adults. The higher self-esteem among younger teachers may be related to the increased enthusiasm, professional aspirations, adaptability to changing educational environments, and increased confidence in using modern teaching approaches and technologies.

The findings also showed a significant relationship between educational qualification (academic achievement) and self-esteem ($p = 0.015$). Teachers with higher academic achievement had higher levels of self-esteem than teachers with lower academic achievement. This result is in line with a large body of literature indicating a positive relationship between academic achievement and self-esteem. Purkey (1970) suggested that self-esteem and academic achievement have reciprocal effects: academic success leads to higher self-esteem, and high self-esteem leads to academic success. West et al. (1980) found that general self-esteem was positively correlated with academic achievement, and Reynolds (1988) found that academic self-concept was positively related to college students' grade point average. Similarly, Covington (1989) concluded that higher self-esteem is associated with higher academic achievement, and lower self-esteem is associated with poorer academic performance.

Further support for the present findings is provided by Carr et al. (1991), who found self-esteem to be a significant predictor of reading awareness, and by Bankston and Zhou (2002), Lockett and Harrell (2003), Schmidt and Padilla (2003), Partington and Kimberly (2004), Reasoner (2005), Srivastava and Joshi (2014), and Haokip et al. (2014) who all reported a positive relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. Reasoner (2005) pointed out that although there is general consensus among researchers that self-esteem is closely related to academic achievement, there are still differences regarding the direction and nature of this relationship. However, some studies have reported inconsistent findings. For example, Tuinen and Ramanaiah (1979), Yogeve and Ilan (1987), Mayo-Booker (1996), Van Laar (2000), and Mishra (2013) found weak or non-significant relationships between academic achievement and self-esteem, suggesting that the relationship may vary across contexts, populations, and measurement approaches.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that gender has no significant impact on the self-esteem of secondary school teachers, but age and educational qualification (academic achievement) are significant factors associated with self-esteem. These results demonstrate the significance of fostering teachers' professional development, continuous academic improvement, and psychological well-being to enhance their self-esteem and efficacy in the teaching profession. Further studies with larger and more heterogeneous samples from different geographical areas are needed to confirm and extend these findings.

VI. CONCLUSION

The results of the present study suggest that gender is not a good predictor of self-esteem among secondary school teachers, as there was no significant difference in self-esteem between male and female teachers. However, age and academic achievement were significant predictors of self-esteem. Younger teachers had significantly higher self-esteem than older teachers, and teachers with higher academic achievement had higher self-esteem than teachers with lower academic achievement. These results suggest that sex may not be a factor in teachers' self-esteem, but age and academic achievement are significant predictors of teachers' psychological well-being and professional confidence.

The results generally agree with numerous studies reporting a positive relationship between academic achievement and self-esteem, although some studies have reported contradictory findings. The present study supports the view that higher academic achievement is associated with higher self-esteem, which in turn may contribute to improved teaching effectiveness, professional competence, and classroom performance. The findings have important implications for educational administrators and policymakers. During teacher recruitment, placement, and professional development, due consideration may be given to factors that promote teachers' self-esteem, particularly continuous academic advancement and professional growth. In addition, mentoring, counseling, and capacity-building programs may be designed to strengthen the self-esteem of senior or older teachers, thus improving their professional effectiveness and overall well-being.

Although the study offers valuable insights into the relationship between self-esteem, age, gender, and academic achievement among secondary school teachers, its findings should be interpreted with caution, as the sample was limited to a single district. Thus, future studies should consider using larger, more diverse, and geographically representative samples to improve generalizability and better understand the factors that influence teachers' self-esteem.

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