



## Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement in English: A Relationship Study at Secondary School Level

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### Abstract

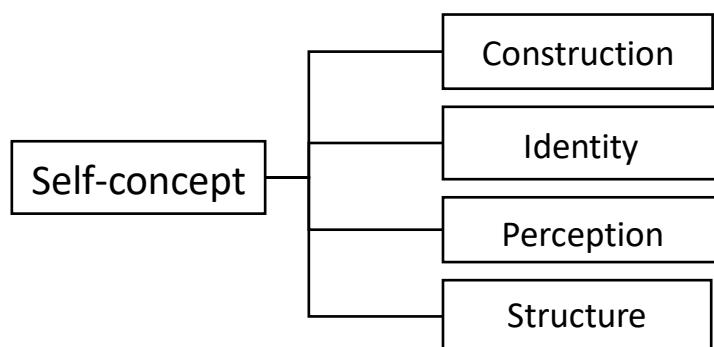
This research was designed within the secondary school population to study self-esteem level of boys and girls and to find out its relationship with their academic achievement in English. The sample of this study was drawn from twenty-four public sector secondary schools of districts Khushab and city district Lahore. There were 1226 secondary school students (636 boys and 590 girls; 734 urban and 492 rural students) in the sample. Data were collected from students studying science (784 students) and humanities (442 students) subjects. To measure self-esteem of students, Urdu translation of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was used. Annual results, declared by the BISE in Punjab, of grade 9 students were taken as academic achievement in English. Data were analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics. The results showed that self-esteem was high in majority of the students. It was noticed that girls had higher level of self-esteem than boys. The students of urban locale had higher level of self-esteem than students of rural locale. It was also noticed that science students had a higher level of self-esteem than humanities students. Majority of the students had high grades in English. In the study, a positive and significant relationship was found between the variables i.e. self-esteem and academic achievement in English at secondary school level. The regression analysis shows that self-esteem is a significant positive predictor of academic achievement in English at secondary school level.

**Keywords:** Self-Esteem, Academic Achievement, Gender Difference

### 1. Introduction

Perceptions are very important in human life especially when it's about their own self. A person may appreciate one's own self and show liking about himself or herself irrespective of the surroundings. This very perception of someone about one's very own self can be termed as self-esteem. The individual's personal holistic judgment is known as self-esteem. Huit (2011) quoted that generally speaking, there are two components of self-i.e. self-concept and self-esteem. The journey of SELF, found in literature, goes back in 17<sup>th</sup> century works of philosopher Descartes when he claimed that knowing about one's own self is the core value of existence of humans. Later Freud used word 'EGO' as regulated feature of human nature. Another important writer in the earlier period is William James who argued the similar thoughts about this construct. His famous formula (James, 1890) regarding self-esteem is still alive. The variety in nomenclature used along with self-concept are construction, identity, perception and structure. It is the collection of beliefs of one about one's own self (Becker et al., 2015).

**Figure 1:** Self-Concept Beliefs



Note. The collection of self-schemas of one about one's own self composes self-concept

Becker et al. (2015) enlisted few components of self-concepts such as personal identity, moral-ethical self, self-consistency, self-expectancy, physical or body image, academic self, social self, transpersonal self and self-esteem etc. Lawrence (2006) explained self-concept as total sum of three features of a person i.e. personal mental characteristics, physical aspects and appraisal of them. In other words one can say that it is thinking, feelings and actions in terms of a behaviour of a person that constitutes self-concept. In the educational context, self-concept is evolving in three areas i.e. image (what one is), ideal (what one would like to be) and esteem (personal feelings about worth). To understand self-esteem, self image is the preparatory point (Lawrence, 2006).

It is said that welfare of a society is dependent on the comforts of its people. The more well-being people are mentally and physically, the more groomed is the society. The roots of problem in any society lies in low self-esteem of its people. Self esteem is a buzz word in our daily life. One finds it every where in our daily conversation with teachers, parents, peers, elders etc. Everyone attempts to boost self-esteem among children (Baumeister et

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al., 2003). Being an abstract concept, self-esteem is stated as person's perception regarding worth or value attached to one's own self (Becker et al., 2015). Maslow (1970) discussed two types of esteem. One is termed as recognition as it is received from others (status), and other is termed as self-respect (dignity) (Kelland, 2015). Self-concept and self-esteem are different concepts as self-concept provides information about self; whereas self-esteem is the appraisal of the self. There are mix blend of positive/negative feelings in self-esteem. Similarly self-concept is composed of perceptions of others while self-esteem is the personal perception about one's own self (Farid & Akhtar, 2013). The usual growth and development process has constantly inconsistency between ideal self and self-image. Due to this discrepancy, people are motivated to change and develop further in their social relations, physical appearance and skills in academics. The young children believe so much in their adults, that they cannot even imagine, that their adults are wrong or could be misguided. When someone fails to come up to the expectations of their parents, the child feels guilty of his/her own self and consider worthless towards the love of parents (Lawrence, 2006). One finds more than two hundred definitions of self-esteem in literature (Farid & Akhtar, 2013). An attitude about one's personal self is called self-esteem and it is the result of various interactions such as cultural, social, interpersonal and family relations (Kususanto & Chua, 2012). All individuals are poles apart. Individual differences is the beauty of life on earth. The children in a single family are not alike. They are different physically, mentally, personally, and even in their life interests. This creates a rich portrait of life on earth. Similarly, people are different in their esteem levels. Few have high, others are low in their self-esteem level. Many reasons can be quoted for this discrepancy such as heredity, environment, physical difference, difficulties in learning, hearing and visual impairments, gender differences and belonging to different ethnic and cultural groups (Lawrence, 2006). Cast & Burke (2002) explained that investigation regarding self-esteem has been done in three diverse ways i.e. as an outcome for the processes that increase or decreases it, as self-motive, noticing the inclination of person in such a way that it can sustain encouraging self-assessments and as cushion for self-protection from harmful experiences. There are many challenges associated with measurement of self-esteem as it is categorically calculated through scales that are self-reported. It is common that one always speaks high about one's ownself. So, objectionable remarks are avoided in the responses provided to researchers while filling up the scales (Baumeister et al. 2003). Self-esteem is an essential component in the life of a student in his/her academic life. Before coming to school, children have countless experiences in their lives. They grow under the influence of their primary care givers such as parents and guardians. Their family has a particular and unique structure where peers and other siblings have definite influence. Along with this socio-economic status of the family plays a key role in development of the children self-esteem. In the contemporary era, digital media is also playing its prominent role in the lives of children (Lawrence, 2006). The most crucial time in the life of a students is the time when he/she is in school days, where the future roads are geared up. Adolescence, cultural identity and other life crises have its own say. The teachers have expectations about their students and they teach them accordingly in classrooms and use effective classroom management strategies. The learners understand the expectancies of their teachers and their appraisal of their own selves is the outcome of these probabilities. The self-esteem of learners in school is due to this teachers' expectations (Prihadi & Chua, 2012). One of the key component of learners' sound psychological comforts in school is the self-esteem that adds to the success in future life of the learner. Researchers have studied self-esteem with relation to various other constructs and established that high self-esteem results in better outcomes such as high academic achievement, occupation and job satisfaction, social and personal relations, hostile behavior, happiness, stress coping, despair, drugs and smoking, disorder in eating, age, gender and many more related issues (Arshad et al., 2015); (Farid & Akhtar, 2013). Being an old construct, research on self-esteem has proliferated in recent century in almost every aspects of human life. Being aware of reflective nature of human, man knows the significance of self-esteem intuitively. According to Branden (1994), self-esteem has consequences that are deeply rooted in almost all forms of our very existence. Learning is at its best when it is accompanied by praise and criticism subject to the contemporary performance. When someone acts or performs better and is rewarded by praise, self-esteem is boosted up, that leads to psychological betterment of the individual that ultimately results into the overall progress of the society. Academic achievement of students remained a key construct among researchers of the world. There are so many factors that influence academic achievement of students and can be grouped into three broad categories i.e. related to students, teachers and the environment of school (Sharma & Sharma, 2021). No one can deny the importance of academic achievement in the life of learners, as it is the most important predictor of professional career and prosperity associated with it. The grades/results at school or college level are of great importance as these are used as selection criteria for securing a job or studies at higher level. Globally it is observed that if the society is more educated, there are more chances of a greater socio-economic development. Due to this fundamental importance, research on academic achievement is fostering globally at a rapid speed. The researchers are trying to find ways to enhance learners' achievement, they try to detect dominant pre-requisites of teaching and learning. In this pursuit, researchers have conducted research on focusing on individual personality traits, motivation and intelligence as well as issues related with environment, teachers and individual differences. Academic achievement is considered as the vital criterion for prosperity at the personal and societal level. As education enables learners to take part in and figure out life in a better way, it is vital to enhance chances of educating masses according to their capacities. While discussing various predictors of academic achievement, Spinath (2012) has

enlisted some of them as individual personality traits, characteristics of classrooms, characteristics of teachers, characteristics of the education system, gender differences, socioeconomic status etc are vital predictors that can enhance or hamper academic achievement in any educational institution or any level during the educational career of the learner. Many studies had been conducted regarding self-esteem and academic achievement in various parts of the world in diverse population (Booth & Gerard, 2011; Vishalakshi & Yeshodhara, 2012; Okafor et al., 2018), but only few studies are conducted in Pakistan on this topic of great interest. Keeping in view the vast research on self-esteem in various domains of life, the present research study was designed and conducted in secondary schools in the Punjab. The tender age of secondary school students provide enrich vast data to policy makers to plan accordingly for a better future. The literature on self-esteem provide enough space to study this construct in local context for better understanding of self-esteem of students for parents and teachers so that both can join hands to provide psychological well-being to students.

## 2. Present Study

This research was designed in the secondary school population to study self-esteem level and its relationship with academic achievement in English. All pupils enrolled in grade 9 in secondary schools of Punjab were part of population of the study. The sample of this study was drawn from twenty-four public sector secondary schools of district Khushab and Lahore. There were 1226 secondary school students (636 boys and 590 girls) in the sample. To measure self-esteem of students, Urdu translation of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was used. The annual results declared by the BISE in Punjab of grade 9 students were taken as academic achievement in English. Both types of statistics i.e. descriptive and inferential were used to analyze the data.

The study has three objectives namely: to study self-esteem level, to find out achievement in English and to find out relationship between self-esteem and achievement in English.

Table 1 describes sample distribution of the study. The sample was drawn from 24 public sector secondary schools.

**Table 1: Distribution of Sample (Boys and Girls) in District Khushab and City District Lahore**

District	Boys	Girls	Total
Khushab	253	275	528
Lahore	383	315	698
Grand Total	636	590	1226

Students' Self-esteem was measured through *Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES)*. Revised edition (1989) of the scale was applied for collection of responses from students. Having brevity and simplicity it is the most popular scale to measure students' self-esteem. As per Rosenberg (1989), this scale estimates personal worth of a person. There are equivalent number of negative and positive statements in the scale.

The original scale was widely translated into different languages (28 quoted by Schmitt & Allik, 2005) of the world. Schmitt & Allik (2005) simultaneously used *RSES* to assess 16998 college students' level of self-esteem in 53 states. Reliability of the tool, in few notable states, measured in their research study is given in table 2.

**Table 2: Reliability of RSES in Specific States**

States	Cronbach $\alpha$
United Kingdom	.90
United States	.88
Turkey	.88
India	.73
Indonesia	.72
Bangladesh	.86

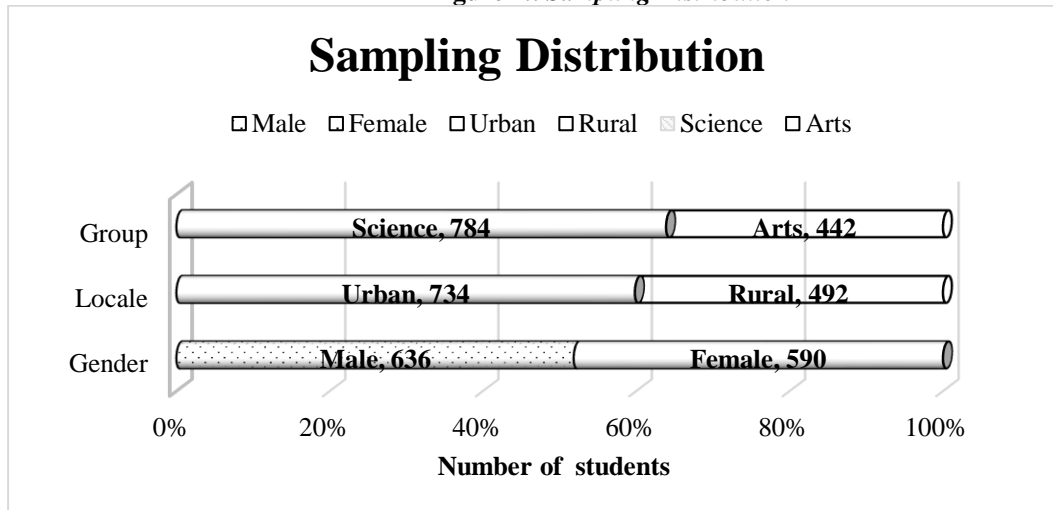
Schmitt & Allik (2005)

In study at hand, Urdu translated version of *RSES* was used. For validity and reliability in the local context see Farid & Akhtar (2013). To calculate academic achievement in English, results of 9<sup>th</sup> class were collected from respective schools.

**Table 3: Sample Distribution of the Study**

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Girls	590	48
Boys	636	52
Locale		
Urban	734	60
Rural	492	40
Group		
Science	784	64
Humanities	442	36
Total	1226	100

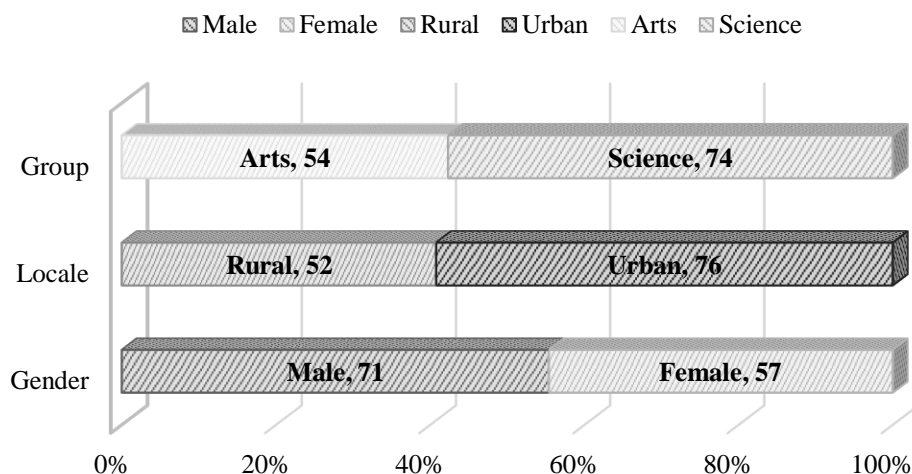
Figure 2.: Sampling Distribution



After data analysis it was found that the respondents showed high level of self-esteem. Whether it was gender wise, locality wise or subject wise, high level of self-esteem was observed in all categories. Very few students in the sample showed low self-esteem level.

Figure 3.: Low Level of Self-Esteem of Students

## Low Level of Self-Esteem of Students



A series of independent samples t-test were run to find out significant mean differences in students' self-esteem level on the basis of gender, locale (rural/urban), and subjects studied (science/humanities) and district.

Table 4: Students' Self-Esteem Level (Gender, Locale, Studied Subjects &amp; Districts)

Variables		N	M	SD	df	t	P
Gender	Boys	636	37.33	5.55	1224	3.002	0.003*
	Girls	590	38.33	6.04			
Locale	Rural	492	37.16	5.59	1224	-3.282	0.001*
	Urban	734	38.27	5.92			
Subjects	Humanities	442	36.50	5.60	1224	-6.244	0.000*
	Science	784	38.62	5.78			
Districts	City District	698	38.44	5.91	1224	4.260	0.000*
	Khushab	528	37.02	5.61			

\*p < 0.05

Table 4 shows that gender wise mean difference was found in levels of self-esteem of boys (M = 37.33, SD = 5.55) and girls (M = 38.33, SD = 6.04); t (1224) = 3.002, p = 0.003\*. Analysis further disclosed that girls (M = 38.33) have high self-esteem than boys (M = 37.33).

Table 4 further describes that locale wise significant mean difference was found in self-esteem levels of rural students ( $M = 37.16$ ,  $SD = 5.59$ ) and urban students ( $M = 38.27$ ,  $SD = 5.92$ );  $t(1224) = -3.282$ ,  $p = 0.001^*$ . Analysis further disclosed that urban students ( $M = 38.27$ ) have high self-esteem than rural students ( $M = 37.16$ ). Table 4 also shows that subject/group wise significant mean difference was found in self-esteem level of humanities students ( $M = 36.50$ ,  $SD = 5.60$ ) and students studying science subjects ( $M = 38.62$ ,  $SD = 5.78$ );  $t(1224) = -6.244$ ,  $p = 0.000^*$ . Analysis further disclosed that students studying science subjects ( $M = 38.62$ ) have high self-esteem than humanities students ( $M = 36.50$ ).

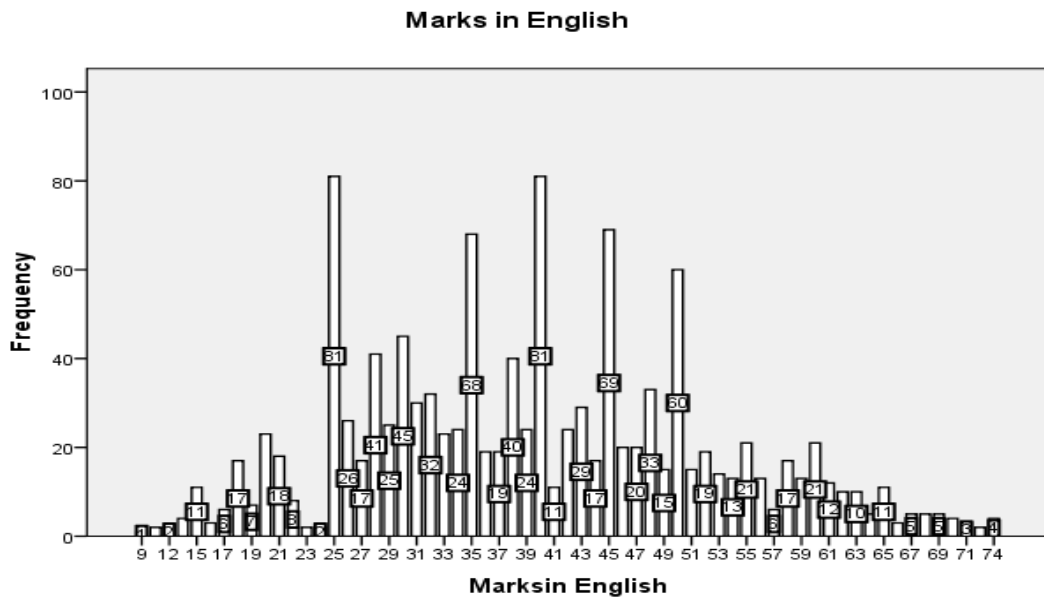
Likewise, table 4 shows that district wise significant mean difference was found in levels of self-esteem of students of district Lahore ( $M = 38.44$ ,  $SD = 5.91$ ) and students of district Khushab ( $M = 37.02$ ,  $SD = 5.61$ );  $t(1224) = 4.260$ ,  $p = 0.000^*$ . Analysis further disclosed that students of district Lahore ( $M = 38.44$ ) have high self-esteem than students of district Khushab ( $M = 37.02$ ).

The academic achievement in English of students was the scores of students in the final paper that was taken by respective Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education in Punjab. The paper of English contains 75 marks. The collected results from respective schools in paper of English revealed the range of score lies from 09 to 74 marks.

**Table 5: Students' Academic Achievement in English**

Variables	Range of Marks	
	Maximum	Minimum
Gender		
Boys	72	10
Girls	74	09
Locale		
Urban	74	10
Rural	70	09
Group		
Science	74	10
Arts	72	09

**Figure 4.: Marks in English**



To estimate the relationship between students' self-esteem and academic achievement in English, Pearson  $r$  was computed.

**Table 6: Correlations between Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement in English**

Self-Esteem	Academic Achievement in English	
	Correlation Coefficient	0.485**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	1226

As per explanation provided by Lodico et al. (2010), the study showed a positive and moderate relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement in English.

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive relationship between students' self-esteem and their academic achievement in English.

**Table 7: Regression Coefficient of Self-Esteem on Academic Achievement in English**

Variable	B	B	SE
Constant	24.24		2.37
Self Esteem	.406	.185	.062
R <sup>2</sup>	.034		

*Note. N= 1226*

\*\*\*p<.001.

Table 7 shows the results of regression analysis that was conducted to determine the predictive relationship between students' self-esteem and their academic achievement in English. The model summary indicates that the predictor self-esteem, explains 3.4% of the variance in academic achievement. The results reveal that the regression model significantly predicts the dependent variable, academic achievement ( $F(1,1224) = 43.143$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This suggests that the model is a good fit for the data. The findings revealed that self-esteem is a significant positive predictor of academic achievement, albeit explaining a small portion of the variance in the dependent variable.

### 3. Discussion and Conclusion

The study at hand was conducted in the secondary school population with a purpose of studying self-esteem level of boys and girls and its relationship with their academic achievement in English. The sample was drawn from public sector secondary schools of district Khushab and city district Lahore. Data were collected from students studying science and humanities subjects in both rural and urban locales so that a true picture can be depicted of the community.

To measure self-esteem of students, Urdu translation of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was used. Annual results, declared by the BISE in Punjab, of grade 9 students were taken as academic achievement in English. Data were analyzed with the use of inferential and descriptive statistics. The results showed that self-esteem was high in majority of the students. It was observed that girls showed higher level of self-esteem than boys. This trend is visible in many other studies conducted in different parts of the world in variety of sample (Farid & Akhtar, 2013; Booth & Gerard, 2011; Schmitt & Allik, 2005; Baumeister et al., 2003).

The students of urban locale had higher level of self-esteem than students of rural locale. In the study of Booth & Gerard (2011) gender and locale differences emerged in US and England school samples. Islam (2021) studied academic achievement and self-esteem in secondary school population in Bangladesh and found that academic achievement was significantly positively correlated with self-esteem.

It was also noticed that science students had a higher level of self-esteem than humanities students. Majority of the students had high grades in English. In the study, a significant but positive relationship was found between the variables i.e. self-esteem and academic achievement in English at secondary school level. Sharma & Sharma (2021) studied the relationship of self-esteem and academic achievement in secondary school population in India and found significant relationship between the variables. Okafor et al., (2018) in their study found that self-esteem and achievement in English is significantly correlated. Vishalakshi & Yeshodhara (2012) studied self-esteem and its relationship with academic achievement in school population and found similar results as compared to the study at hand.

One can safely conclude that high self-esteem is an important aspect in life of learners that brings motivation in learner and in times of stress or failures gives learners strength to rebound or spring back in a better way as compared to learners with low esteem level. They have a better initiative to perform any task (academics, sports, life related activities, happiness or positive mind set) in their surroundings. The self-esteem in a class can be enhanced by teachers by increasing the positive feedback in the classroom, by increasing quantity of group activities and by showing concerns to the learners' problems related to their stay in educational institutions. The teachers should address the total self-concept while paying attention to the development of ideal self and self-image of the students. The success in modern life is not dependent on one single factor, rather it's the combination of many factors but high self-esteem can be regarded as one of the essential building block of success in contemporary world.

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