



RESEARCH PAPER

Self-esteem and Academic Self Concept: A Comparison of Government and Private Schools in Quetta

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the differences in academic self-concept and self-esteem of adolescent students in government and private schools of Quetta. Moreover, the study also explored the relationship between students' academic self-concept and self-esteem. The sample comprised 414 students aged 14 - 17 years from government and private schools. Rosenberg's scale of self-esteem and Academic Self Concept Scale for Adolescents (ASCA) were employed as measures of self-esteem and academic self concept. Results showed that students of government schools scored higher on academic self-concept and students of private schools scored higher on self-esteem. A weak negative correlation was found between academic self-concept and self-esteem. The study recommends developing policies on institutional as well as government level that help incorporate academic self concept into self esteem and self concept of students.

KEYWORDS

Academic Self-Concept, Self-Esteem, Private Schools, Government Schools, Public Schools, Self-Worth

Introduction

In Pakistan, currently two major education systems at school level prevail, government schools and private schools. In the last two decades there has been a surge in the trend to send children to private schools and although there seem to be concerns regarding this trend, there are several factors and consequences accompanying this change.

The division between government and private schools involves a lot of factors. For example private schools are considered by some experts to be a good alternative as government cannot bear the expenses of school education alone. Therefore private schools help provide school education although on a higher cost than government schools. However, since private schools charge higher fees, they tend to produce an upper class- lower class split in the population, which may have certain consequences too (Aslam, 2009). But despite creating the alleged split, private schools have a reputation of providing better quality education.

For example, a review of research regarding private and government school comparison in South Asia, Caribbean and Africa, also concluded that despite certain methodological weaknesses in certain studies included in the review, private schools seem to provide better quality education than government schools, especially in South Asia (Siddiqui & Gorard, 2017).

As far as the growth of private schools is concerned, the number of teachers joining private schools also showed a rapid increase for an extended period of time. De Talancé (2020) explored the factors that may have caused the growth of private schools in last two

decades in Pakistan. According to findings of this study, both the performance as well as the perception of performance turned out to be in favor of private schools. However, as discussed repeatedly private schools have an elitist impression and are not easily affordable for a huge segment of the society.

Describing the consequences of government/public- private division in education, Shamim and Rashid (2019) state that it becomes difficult for middle class people to access higher education in private higher education institutes because such institutes besides charging high fees, also have English as their medium of instruction. Whereas most of the public/ government schools are Urdu medium. This division in medium of instruction in government and private schools makes it challenging for middle class government school pass-outs to even qualify for studies in English medium private higher education institutes. This also creates a class divide between a superior kind of education that includes mainly science and technology and that is provided in private higher education institutes and an inferior one that mainly includes arts and humanities and is provided in government/ public higher education institutes. Such a class division may have consequences for self-concept and specifically for the academic self concept of students pursuing education in these different kinds of institutes.

Literature Review

Self concept is broadly defined as “a person’s self-beliefs formed through experience and with interpretations of his or her environment”(Shavelson et al, 1976, p. 411).

Academic self concept which refers to a person’s beliefs regarding their competence in academic context has also been considered an extremely relevant factor in educational settings (Susperreguy et al., 2017).

Academic self concept has been studied in terms of two sub components; cognitive and affective (Kadir et al., 2017). The cognitive component refers to a person’s perceived academic ability in a specific domain and the affective component refers to the person’s feelings toward the domain that also include interest and motivational aspects.

Academic self concept can play a significant role in shaping an individual’s educational experience by affecting their cognitive processes, self regulation and expectations of achievement (Schunk et al., 2014). Academic achievement has also been repeatedly found to be associated with academic self concept (Wolff & Möller , 2022). This association has been explained in terms of reciprocal effect model (REM) (Wu et.al., 2021), self- enhancement model (Shavelson & Bolus, 1982), skill development model (Ganley & Lubienski, 2016) and extended skill development model (Sorjonen et al., 2024).

Another construct relevant in the context of self-concept is self-esteem, which can be described as the extent to which an individual positively appraises himself/herself (Rosenberg et al., 1995). The construct of self-esteem is so relevant in almost all domains of life that thousands of researches in a huge number of domains have been published since the time this idea was introduced by William James. Self-esteem has been further categorized into global (an overall evaluation of oneself) and specific (related with specific domains of life, such as physical attributes, social skills etc) self-esteem although global self-esteem has been more frequently studied (Rosenberg et al., 1995) and is considered by many researchers to show more stability than specific self-esteem (Hank & Baltes-Götz, 2019). Self-esteem and academic performance have also been extensively studied across the world (Munaf, 2022; Batista et al., 2022; Vacalares et al., 2023; Ahmat et al., 2018) and most of the literature indicates a significant positive relationship between the two constructs.

As academic self concept and self-esteem tend to show a significant positive relationship with student outcomes, it seems logical to explore how the different facilities

provided at government and private schools as well as various other differences between the two types of schools such as differences in fee, perception of school's status and performance, are associated with these two student outcomes, i-e self-esteem and academic self concept. It can be speculated that success and growth of private schools in Pakistan is probably attributable to the difference in the way both types of schools affect students' self-esteem and academic self concept. As there has been rapid growth of private elitist schools in Quetta as well in the past two decades and the differences in government and private schooling in Quetta has not been explored previously, the present study is aimed at exploring how private and government schools differ in terms of students' academic self concept and self-esteem in Quetta.

Hypotheses

Therefore following hypotheses were developed:

H1: There would be a significant difference between government and private schools in terms of students' self-esteem.

H2: There would be a significant difference between government and private schools in terms of students' academic self concept.

Moreover, various studies have suggested a positive relationship between academic self concept and self-esteem at different educational levels (Arzeen et al., 2024; Trautvein et al., 2006; Hassan et al., 2016). Therefore, the present study would also explore how in the context of Quetta, adolescent students' self concept and self-esteem are related. Following hypothesis is developed to evaluate this relationship:

H3: Self-esteem and academic self concept of students would be significantly correlated.

Material and Methods

Nature

The present study is a cross sectional, correlational study of academic self concept and self esteem among government and private schools.

Population

The population comprised students of 9th and 10th class in public and private schools of Quetta city.

Tools

Self-esteem was measured by Rosenberg (1965) self-esteem scale that has been widely used as a self-report measure of global self esteem and has manifested internal consistency of around .7 for Pakistani adolescents in different studies (Malik et al., 2024). Academic Self Concept Scale for Adolescents (ASCA) (Ordaz-Villegas, 2013) was used to measure academic self-concept. The scale comprises sixteen items and four factors: self-regulation, general intellectual abilities, motivation and creativity. Internal consistency of ASCA was found to be .81 when it was developed.

Pilot Testing

A convenience sample of 40 students including both public and private schools and gender balanced, participated in the pilot testing. The internal consistency of the self esteem scale turned out to be .65 and for the ASCA, it was .69.

Sample

For the main study, a convenience sample of 414 students aged 14 - 17 years from Quetta participated in the study. Convenience sampling was chosen as sampling technique in the present research due to unavailability of sampling frame which is necessary for probability sampling. As the self-report questionnaires were in English language, only the students who were comfortable in understanding English were included. From government schools 210 students and from private schools 204 students participated.

Ethical Considerations

The research was approved by the departmental ethics committee. Permission was taken from the administration of each school and informed consent was taken from each student.

Results

Descriptive statistics for self-esteem scale and academic self concept for adolescents scale indicated normally distributed data with values for skewness and kurtosis lying in acceptable ranges (see Table 1).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for SE and ASCA

	SE	ASCA
N	414	414
Mean	19.5	53.8
SD	4.2	10
Skewness	.72	-.17
Kurtosis	.23	.23
Maximum	35	89
Minimum	11	25
Cronbach's Alpha	.67	.71

For self-esteem, the findings indicated a significant difference with $t(320.16) = -8.01$, $p < .01$, between private schools ($M = 21.1$, $SD = 4.9$) and government schools ($M = 17.9$, $SD = 2.7$).

Similarly for academic self concept as well, the findings indicated a significant difference with $t(390.15) = 7.6$, $p < .01$ between private schools ($M = 50$, $SD = 10$) and government schools ($M = 57$, $SD = 8.3$). (As Levene's test for equality of variances was significant for both self esteem and academic self concept, the t values reported are those with equality of variances not assumed.) (Winer et al., 1971).

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to evaluate how self-esteem and academic self concept are related. The results indicated a weak negative correlation, $r(412) = -.283$, $p < .01$, between the two variables.

Discussion

The study intended to explore how government schools and private schools of Quetta differ in terms of students' self-esteem and academic self concept. Moreover, the relationship between self-esteem and academic self concept was also explored.

The results revealed that students of government and private schools in terms of self-esteem and academic self concept differed significantly. The students of private schools demonstrate higher scores on self-esteem and students of government schools demonstrate higher scores on academic self concept.

Higher levels of self-esteem for private school students is not unexpected, as self-esteem is determined by several factors, including the school environment and family's socio-economic status (Li et al., 2021). Moreover, although the studies sometimes indicate higher levels of self-esteem for government school students (Islam, 2021), still, private school students demonstrate higher levels of self-esteem as compared with public/ government schools more often (Eremie & Chikweru, 2015). Higher levels of self-esteem among private school students might be indicative of the relationship of self-esteem with perceived and actual socioeconomic class students of private schools belong to. It may also be speculated that the facilities and treatment that students of private schools are provided with in comparison with relatively less refined atmosphere of government schools, could be the factors contributing to higher self-esteem.

Government schools students on the other hand manifested higher levels of academic self concept than their private school counterparts. One of the factors that can be speculated as a possible explanation for this difference is "Big Fish Little Pond Effect", BFLPE (Marsh, 1984 as cited in Fang et al., 2018) which refers to the fact that students from schools with higher levels of achievement and merit tend to have lower academic self concept. Students in such schools have high ability students as their comparison group, therefore they usually have lower academic self concept than the students of similar ability levels in other schools. As private schools in Quetta as well have a reputation of having high ability students, BFLPE might be at work in lowering the levels of academic self concept in students of these schools. Another possible explanation is that government school students probably experience less academic pressure and more achievable goals, which makes them feel successful and confident with much more ease than students in private schools. However the factors contributing to the difference in academic self concept between government and private schools needs to be explored in detail.

The third finding of the present study was the weak negative correlation between academic self concept and self-esteem. This finding indicates that students with higher self-esteem have lower academic self concept and vice versa, although the relationship is weak. This kind of relationship may provide insight in to why education is still not a highly valued asset and a priority for people in Pakistan. As self-esteem is a more general sense of self-worth, it seems to develop from myriad factors and academic self concept does not seem to be a significant one among them. Because academic self concept does not show a strong positive correlation with self-esteem, it becomes clear that students do not see much value in developing good academic self concept; they do not see academics as having much importance for their self-worth. There can be several other culturally relevant factors defining their self worth, which need to be explored.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of the present study reveal that private school students have higher self-esteem levels than government school students and government school students have higher levels of academic self concept than private school students. Self-esteem and academic self concept show a weak negative relationship.

Recommendations

One of the practical implications stems in the weak negative correlation between self-esteem and self concept. As the study was carried out with students in adolescence, the factors that define their self worth at this formative stage of life should be taken very seriously as these factors will probably have a long term effect on a person's life. If students do not see their self-esteem as connected with their academic self concept, they are not likely to put much effort in their academic endeavors. As the primary responsibility of making academic self concept relevant in individuals' lives lies on schools, school administration in both public and private sector needs to work on developing an environment where students

see their academic self concept having value and importance in their self perceptions as well as in their lives. Introducing different kinds of awards and competitions in various academic domains may assist in reinforcing a positive academic self-concept. Government as well as parents also need to understand why making academic self concept relevant to adolescent students' self esteem is important and need to act accordingly. If academic self concept remains irrelevant and is not incorporated in students' over all sense of self worth, it is unlikely to have adolescents who will take studies seriously. Furthermore, government schools need to work on factors that would enhance students' self esteem, such as more opportunities for personal growth and co curricular exposure.

Future research should employ quota sampling or stratified random sample for a clearer picture regarding the variables involved in the present study. Moreover future research could also benefit from including a qualitative exploration of experiencing education at government and private schools.

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