



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND HAPPINESS AMONG RURAL ADOLESCENTS

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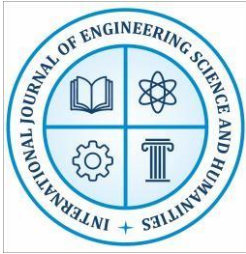
Abstract

The present study was designed to assess the relationship between self-esteem and happiness among rural adolescents. A sample of 200 rural adolescents (100 males and 100 females) studying in Government Senior Secondary Schools located in the Jhajjar district of Haryana. Their age ranged from 15 to 18 years, representing the middle and late stages of adolescence has been taken for this purpose. A questionnaire on Self-Esteem Inventory, developed by Virk and Chauhan (2003) and Chinese Happiness Inventory (CHI) developed by Lu and Shih (1997) were administered on the samples. The obtained data was analyzed through mean, SD and Pearson's coefficient of correlation. The findings revealed two important observations. First, the participants demonstrated relatively high levels of self-esteem. Second, they reported comparatively low levels of happiness despite their positive self-evaluation. The findings of the present study have important implications for educational psychology, clinical psychology, counseling psychology, and community mental health. Since self-esteem was found to be positively associated with happiness among rural adolescents, interventions aimed at strengthening self-esteem may contribute significantly to improving their overall psychological well-being.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Happiness and Rural Adolescents

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of personal worth, competence, and value. It represents the degree to which individuals accept themselves, respect themselves, and believe they are capable of dealing successfully with life's challenges. Rosenberg (1965) described self-esteem as a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward oneself, whereas Coopersmith (1967) defined it as the evaluation an individual makes and maintains regarding personal worthiness. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), esteem needs represent one of the higher levels of human motivation. Individuals require both self-respect and recognition from others to achieve psychological well-being. Satisfaction of esteem needs promotes confidence, competence, independence, and achievement, whereas unmet esteem needs may result in feelings of inferiority and helplessness. Adolescents with high self-esteem generally demonstrate greater confidence, better emotional regulation, effective problem-solving skills, stronger interpersonal relationships, and higher academic motivation. They are more likely to view challenges as opportunities for growth rather than threats to personal competence. In contrast, adolescents with low self-esteem frequently experience self-doubt, anxiety, and depression, fear of failure, poor social adjustment, and reduced resilience. They may avoid challenging situations because of fear of criticism or rejection. Research has consistently shown that low self-esteem is associated with behavioral problems, substance



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abuse, emotional disorders, and decreased life satisfaction. Consequently, self-esteem is widely regarded as a protective factor that enhances psychological adjustment and overall well-being.

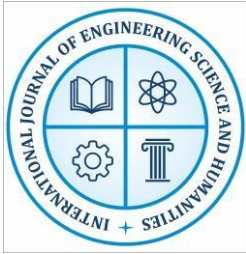
Happiness

Happiness is one of the central concepts in positive psychology and has been studied extensively from philosophical and psychological perspectives. It is generally defined as a positive emotional state characterized by frequent positive emotions, infrequent negative emotions, and overall satisfaction with life. Seligman (2011) proposed that authentic happiness extends beyond temporary pleasure and includes engagement, meaningful relationships, accomplishment, and purpose in life. Two major perspectives explain happiness. The hedonic perspective emphasizes pleasure attainment, enjoyment, and life satisfaction, whereas the eudaimonic perspective focuses on personal growth, self-realization, and meaningful living. Modern psychological research recognizes that both perspectives contribute to overall well-being.

Relationship between Self-Esteem and Happiness

Studies consistently indicate that self-esteem serves as a significant predictor of subjective well-being, life satisfaction, resilience, and psychological adjustment. The following review summarizes important empirical studies relevant to the present investigation. Rosenberg concluded that self-esteem is a fundamental determinant of healthy personality development and psychological well-being (Rosenberg, 1965). The Antecedents of Self-Esteem examined factors influencing self-esteem among children and adolescents. The findings indicated that supportive parenting, acceptance, and encouragement contributed significantly to higher self-esteem, which in turn promoted academic achievement, emotional adjustment, and social competence (Coopersmith, 1967). Campbell and colleagues investigated the relationship between self-esteem and subjective well-being. Their findings demonstrated that individuals possessing positive self-evaluations experienced greater life satisfaction, optimism, and happiness. High self-esteem was identified as a major predictor of psychological adjustment (Campbell et al. 1976). Parducci (1995) described happiness as a long-lasting emotional state associated with fulfillment, meaning, and life satisfaction rather than temporary pleasure. The other study emphasized that happiness develops through positive life experiences, successful adaptation, and psychological growth.

Lykken and Tellegen (1996) explored the genetic and environmental determinants of happiness using twin studies. Although hereditary factors contributed substantially to happiness, environmental experiences and personality characteristics, including self-esteem, also significantly influenced subjective well-being. Myers (2000) examined determinants of happiness and reported that meaningful interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, optimism, social support, and purposeful living contribute more to happiness than material wealth. The study emphasized the importance of psychological resources in promoting mental health. Diener (2000) reviewed research on subjective well-being and concluded that happiness is



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influenced by multiple factors including personality, family environment, health, employment, and social relationships. Self-esteem consistently emerged as one of the strongest psychological correlates of happiness. Argyle (2001) investigated psychological determinants of happiness and observed that social relationships, employment, leisure activities, and positive personality traits significantly contribute to subjective well-being. Individuals with higher self-esteem were found to enjoy healthier interpersonal relationships and greater happiness. Baumeister and colleagues (2003) reviewed evidence concerning self-esteem and concluded that although high self-esteem alone does not guarantee success, it enhances resilience, confidence, persistence, and psychological adjustment. Adolescents with healthy self-esteem generally cope more effectively with academic and social challenges. Dogan, Totan, and Sapmaz, (2013) investigated the effects of psychological well-being, emotional self-efficacy, affect balance, and self-esteem on happiness among university students. Structural equation modeling revealed significant positive relationships among psychological well-being, self-esteem, and happiness. Self-esteem acted as a mediator between emotional competence and happiness.

Though, several studies (mentioned above) have reported strong relationship between self-esteem and happiness among rural adolescents. After extensive review of literature the following objectives were proposed.

Statement of the Problem

- ***Relationship between Self-Esteem and Happiness among Rural Adolescents***

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of self-esteem among rural adolescents.
2. To assess the level of happiness among rural adolescents.
3. To examine the relationship between self-esteem and happiness among rural adolescents.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and happiness among rural adolescents.
2. There is a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and happiness among rural adolescents.

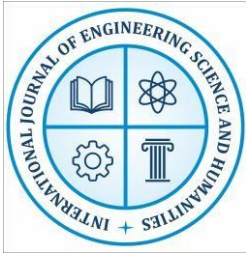
Methodology

Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational research design to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and happiness among rural adolescents. A correlational study design was considered appropriate because the primary objective of the study was to determine the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the two psychological variables without manipulating any independent variable.

Sample

A purposive sampling technique was employed for selecting the participants. The participants consisted of 200 rural adolescents (100 males and 100 females) studying in



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government senior secondary schools located in the Jhajjar district of Haryana, India. Their age ranged from 15 to 18 years, representing the middle and late stages of adolescence. The participants belonged to rural families with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and educational experiences.

Tools Used

The following tools/ instruments were used for this purpose:

Self-Esteem Inventory (Virk and Chauhan, 2003)

The Self-Esteem Inventory, developed by Virk and Chauhan (2003), was used to assess the participants' global self-esteem. The inventory is designed to measure an individual's overall evaluation of self-worth and self-acceptance. The inventory consists of 20 items, including 10 positively worded and 10 negatively worded statements. Participants respond to each item using a Yes/No response format. The instrument is applicable to individuals aged 15 years and above, making it appropriate for the adolescent sample included in the present study. The inventory is scored according to the direction of the item. For positively worded items, a score of 1 is assigned to a "Yes" response, whereas for negatively worded items, a score of 1 is assigned to a "No" response. Responses inconsistent with the scoring key receive a score of 0. The total possible score ranges from 0 to 20, with higher scores indicating higher levels of self-esteem. The reported test-retest reliability coefficient was 0.82 for males and 0.83 for females, indicating a satisfactory level of temporal stability. The inventory has reported evidence of concurrent validity and has been used in psychological research with adolescent populations. The available evidence supports its use as a measure of global self-esteem.

Chinese Happiness Inventory (Lu and Shih, 1997)

The Chinese Happiness Inventory (CHI) developed by Lu and Shih (1997) was used to assess participants' happiness and subjective psychological well-being. The instrument was selected to obtain a standardized measure of the participants' positive emotional experiences and overall subjective well-being. The Chinese Happiness Inventory consist 8 items assessing dimensions related to positive affect, the relative absence of negative affect, and overall life satisfaction. The Chinese Happiness Inventory consists of 48 items assessing dimensions related to positive affect, the relative absence of negative affect, and overall life satisfaction. Each item is rated on a 4-point response scale ranging from 0 to 3, with higher scores representing greater happiness. The total score on the Chinese Happiness Inventory can range from 0 to 144. Higher total scores indicate higher levels of happiness and subjective well-being. The reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.95, indicating excellent internal consistency. The reported test-retest reliability coefficient is 0.66, suggesting acceptable temporal stability. The instrument has demonstrated satisfactory evidence of validity. In particular, the reported validity coefficient of 0.62 in relation to Diener et al.'s Life Satisfaction Scale provides evidence of its convergent or concurrent validity as a measure of subjective well-being.

Procedure



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Self-Esteem Inventory and Chinese Happiness Inventory were administered to each student separately. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained. The participants were explained carefully about instructions and also satisfied their queries. They were requested to respond truly and were assured that their responses would be kept confidential. The administration required approximately 30–40 minutes. Completed questionnaires were scored according to the manuals provided with each instrument. Scoring was done as per scoring guidelines given in manuals and data were analyzed by calculating Mean, SD and coefficient of correlation.

Statistical Analysis

The obtained data were subjected to statistical analysis by using SPSS software (version 16.5) for computation of Mean, Standard Deviation, Pearson's coefficient of correlation for examining the relationship between self-esteem and happiness among rural adolescents. The Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation was calculated.

Results and Discussion

The data collected from 200 rural adolescents were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation with the help of SPSS Version 16.0. The statistical analysis was performed to determine the level of self-esteem and happiness and to examine the relationship between these two psychological variables. The findings are presented in table-1.

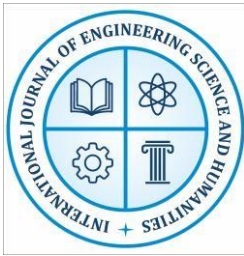
Table 1 shows Descriptive Statistics of Self-Esteem and Happiness (N-200)

Descriptive Statistics		
Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-Esteem	16.18	3.06
Happiness	47.59	17.72

Table 1 indicates that the mean score for self-esteem was 16.18 (SD = 3.06), suggesting that rural adolescents generally possessed high levels of self-esteem. According to the norms of the Self-Esteem Inventory, scores above 15 indicate healthy self-esteem. This finding suggests that the participants perceived themselves positively and demonstrated confidence in their abilities. The mean happiness score was 47.59 (SD = 17.72). Based on the norms of the Chinese Happiness Inventory, this score falls within the low range of happiness. Thus, although the adolescents exhibited relatively healthy self-esteem, they reported comparatively lower levels of subjective happiness. These findings imply that happiness is influenced by several additional psychosocial and environmental factors beyond self-esteem alone.

Table 2 shows Pearson's coefficient of correlation between Self-Esteem and Happiness (N-200)

Pearson's coefficient of correlation		
Variables	Self-Esteem	Happiness



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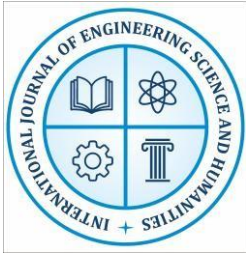
Self-Esteem	1	0.315**
Happiness	0.315**	1

**Significant at level 0.01, *Significant at level 0.05

Table 2 demonstrates a statistically significant positive correlation between self-esteem and happiness ($r=0.315$, $p<.01$). The obtained coefficient indicates a moderate positive relationship, suggesting that adolescents with higher self-esteem tend to report greater happiness. Accordingly, the alternative hypothesis stating that *there is a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and happiness among rural adolescents* is accepted, while the null hypothesis is rejected.

The present investigation examined the relationship between self-esteem and happiness among rural adolescents. The findings revealed two important observations. First, the participants demonstrated relatively high levels of self-esteem. Second, they reported comparatively low levels of happiness despite their positive self-evaluation. Furthermore, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation indicated a significant positive relationship ($r=0.315$, $p<.01$) between self-esteem and happiness. These findings provide empirical support for the hypothesis that adolescents with higher self-esteem are more likely to experience greater happiness. The relatively high self-esteem observed among rural adolescents may be attributed to supportive family environments, strong community relationships, and cultural values emphasizing cooperation and belongingness. Rural families often provide close interpersonal relationships and emotional security, which facilitate the development of positive self-perceptions. According to Maslow's theory of motivation, satisfaction of belongingness and esteem needs contributes to confidence, competence, and positive self-worth. Similarly, Rosenberg (1965) argued that self-esteem develops through positive social interactions and acceptance by significant others.

Despite healthy self-esteem, the participants demonstrated comparatively low levels of happiness. This finding suggests that self-esteem alone does not guarantee psychological well-being. Happiness is a multidimensional construct influenced by numerous personal and environmental factors including socioeconomic conditions, educational stress, career uncertainty, family expectations, physical health, peer relationships, and recreational opportunities. Rural adolescents frequently encounter financial limitations, restricted educational facilities, and fewer mental health resources, which may adversely influence their emotional well-being despite possessing positive self-evaluations. The observed correlation coefficient ($r = 0.315$) indicates a statistically significant but moderate relationship between self-esteem and happiness. This finding suggests that self-esteem contributes positively to happiness but explains only part of the variance in subjective well-being. Other psychological constructs such as optimism, resilience, emotional intelligence, perceived social support, and coping strategies likely contribute substantially to adolescents' happiness. The findings are



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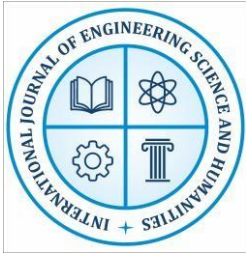
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consistent with several national and international investigations. Campbell et al. (1976) reported that individuals with positive self-evaluations generally experience greater life satisfaction and emotional stability. Campbell (1981) similarly concluded that self-esteem is one of the strongest predictors of psychological well-being. The present findings also support the work of Diener and Diener (1995), who demonstrated across different cultures that self-esteem significantly predicts subjective well-being. Their research suggested that individuals who possess positive self-concepts are more likely to experience satisfaction with life and frequent positive emotions.

Similarly, Myers (2000) emphasized that happiness depends more upon psychological resources and interpersonal relationships than material wealth. Adolescents possessing healthy self-esteem generally develop stronger social relationships, better coping abilities, and more adaptive emotional regulation, all of which contribute to happiness. The results are also consistent with the findings of Dogan, Totan, and Sapmaz (2013), who found significant positive relationships among self-esteem, emotional self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and happiness. Their structural equation model demonstrated that self-esteem partially mediates the relationship between emotional competence and happiness. The present findings further correspond with those reported by Orth and Robins (2014), who concluded through longitudinal research that high self-esteem predicts better psychological adjustment, academic success, satisfying interpersonal relationships, and lower vulnerability to depression and anxiety. Similarly, Sowislo and Orth (2013) reported that low self-esteem constitutes a significant risk factor for depressive symptoms, whereas healthy self-esteem functions as a protective factor promoting psychological well-being. From an Indian perspective, the findings correspond with studies emphasizing the importance of family support, educational opportunities, and community relationships in promoting adolescent mental health. Rural adolescents often derive confidence from close family bonds and collective cultural values. However, increasing academic competition, career uncertainty, and limited educational resources may reduce their overall happiness despite maintaining healthy self-esteem.

Overall, the findings indicate that self-esteem is an important psychological resource that contributes significantly to happiness among rural adolescents. Nevertheless, enhancing happiness requires broader interventions targeting family support, educational environments, emotional resilience, social connectedness, and access to mental health services. Schools should incorporate life-skills education, counseling programmes, positive psychology interventions, and resilience-building activities to improve adolescents' overall psychological well-being.

The findings of the present study have important implications for educational psychology, clinical psychology, counseling psychology, and community mental health. Since self-esteem was found to be positively associated with happiness among rural adolescents,



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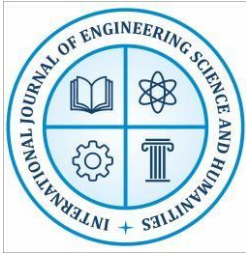
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interventions aimed at strengthening self-esteem may contribute significantly to improving their overall psychological well-being.

In conclusion, fostering self-esteem represents an effective strategy for promoting happiness and overall mental health among rural adolescents. However, sustainable psychological well-being can only be achieved through collaborative efforts that address educational, familial, social, and community factors influencing adolescent development.

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