SELF ESTEEM AND LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: THE ROLE OF GENDER AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

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Abstract

Self esteem and Life satisfaction have greater contribution over wellbeing of human beings. Basing on the importance of these factors, the study was designed to assess the levels of self esteem and life satisfaction among the university students. The sample consisted of 120 (60 males and 60 females) students from Utkal University and Ravenshaw University. Coopersmith's Self Esteem Inventory and Diener's Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) were administered on the participants. The data were analysed by means of Pearson's 'r', and 'Two Way ANOVA' (F). The results revealed that the self esteem and Life Satisfaction were significantly positively related. The Female High SES University Students showed a higher level of Self esteem and Female Moderate SES University Students showed a higher level of Life satisfaction. Finally, the implications were discussed.

Keywords: Self esteem, Life satisfaction, wellbeing, Socio-Economic Status (SES), Gender differences, Self concept

INTRODUCTION

Philosophers and psychologists have long been concerned with the good life and how it can be achieved (Guignon, 1999; Russell, 1930, 1945). The core of good life basically depends upon various aspects out of which the degree of life satisfaction, positive thinking and self esteem plays a primary role. The term self esteem comes from a Greek word

meaning "reverence for self." The "self" part of self esteem pertains to the values, beliefs and attitudes that we hold about ourselves. The "esteem" part of self esteem describes the value and worth that one gives oneself. Self esteem represents the reflection of a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth. Self esteem encompasses beliefs (for example, "I am competent", "I am worthy") and emotions such as triumph, despair, pride and shame. Self esteem can apply specifically to a particular dimension (for example, "I believe I am a good writer and I feel happy about that") or have global extent (for example, "I believe I am a bad person, and feel bad of myself in general"). High self esteem is considered important because it is associated with higher levels of psychological health and functioning and low levels of self esteem are undesirable because it is associated with lower levels of psychological health and functioning (Glaus, 1999). The high self esteem of the individual indicates that he has a positive perception about himself. The high self esteem may have a positive effect on life satisfaction of the individual (Çeçen, 2008).

"Life satisfaction is an overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one's life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive. It is one of three major indicators of well-being: life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect (Diener, 1984). It represents how satisfied people feel with their life generally, as contrasted with positive affect (sometimes called just 'happiness'), which represents how they feel at a single point in time. That is, life satisfaction involves people thinking about their life as a whole, including factors such as whether they are achieving their goals, are doing as well as other people around them, and are happy generally rather than just right now. Life satisfaction is thus a longer-term measure than affect.

Review of Literature

Several studies conducted by other psychologists on self esteem and life satisfaction are as follows;

Self esteem

Self-esteem was found to be influenced by gender of orphans and the self-esteem in turn influenced the aspiration of education level as well as jobs (Wanjiru & Gathogo, 2014). Students having high self esteem engaged themselves in various sports activities than lower self esteem students. (Yiğiter, 2014)

A Meta analysis by Huang (2010) indicates that, despite slightly increasing from childhood to the first decade of young adulthood, self esteem does not change beyond 30 years old. Self esteem changes the most during the first decade of young adulthood. The effects of gender and time span between assessments on change in self esteem were minimal during adolescence, while the way self esteem is measured significantly affects change. Low self esteem serves as a risk factor for depression in adolescence and young adulthood (Orth, Robins & Roberts, 2008). Academically successful students have a more critical view of themselves and students with more modest academic abilities compensate for their academic under-achievement by elevating their general self esteem. (Pullmann & Allik, 2008) According to De Hart, Pelham and Tennen (2006) young adult children who reported that their parents were more nurturing reported higher implicit self esteem compared with those whose parents were less nurturing

There is a controversial link between global self esteem and externalizing problems such as aggression, antisocial behavior, and delinquency. And also there are relations among self esteem, narcissism, and externalizing problems. (Donnellan et al., 2005) A study by Tiggemann (2005) suggests that young girls with heavier actual weight and perceptions of being overweight were particularly vulnerable to developing low self esteem. Study conducted by Jordan and his associates (2005) indicated that individuals with high explicit self esteem are more likely to discriminate ethnically, as a defensive technique, to the extent that they have relatively low implicit self esteem.

Harter (1990, 1999) suggests that satisfaction with physical appearance is a large component of self esteem, and adolescent girls have greater dissatisfaction with physical appearance than do boys. According to Harter, Hirsch and DuBois, (1990, 1991) one-third to one-half of adolescents struggle with low self esteem, especially in early adolescence. It is found that during middle and late adolescence, and into early adulthood, self esteem stabilizes or even increases (Williams & Demo, 1983; Harter, 1990). Adolescent females, on average, have a lower sense of self esteem than adolescent males (Baumeister, 1993; Pipher, 1994). Male shows a greater level of self esteem and more emotionally expressive. (Pollack,1998) Relationships with parents and relationships with peers are two important sources of social support that contribute to adolescents' self esteem (Harter, 1990; Williams & Demo, 1983). Individuals who have high self esteem trust themselves to take risks to achieve their aims despite the possibility of failure and become more ambitious. On the contrary, individuals with low self esteem tend to protect themselves, fearing rejection in the

pursuit of success and prestige, avoiding risk, and making situations difficult for themselves (Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989).

Life satisfaction

According to Hou (2014) the positive association between locality income and life satisfaction to a large extent is attributable to the selective geographic concentration of individuals by income, marital status, and home ownership. Kolosnitsyna et. al (2014) found a significant gender difference in factors of life satisfaction.

Serin, Serin and Özbaş (2010) conducted a study on university students .The revealed that the students' level of life satisfaction could be significantly predicted by their anxiety, depression, satisfaction with their department and socio-economic level. "Anxiety, depression and socio-economic level" were found to be the most important predictors of their life satisfaction of students. A study by Garcia, Rosenberg & Siddiqui, (2010) revealed that adolescents in the distant condition expected higher life satisfaction than adolescents in the near condition. There is significant difference between life satisfaction levels of the individuals participating and not participating in physical activity**.** (Baştuğ & Duman, 2010). According to Upmane and Sebre (2010) the sources of life satisfaction judgment most often mentioned were relationships, personal development, financial situation, goals and education.

Universal life satisfaction age trajectory may not exist; the relationship between age and life satisfaction is likely to vary along with important cultural, political, and socioeconomic factors (Baird et al., 2010)

Spirituality, well-being and hope have important role in life satisfaction and psychological adjustment**.** (Jafari & et al., 2010) The study conducted by Cohn et al. (2009) suggests that change in resilience mediated the relation between positive emotions and increased life satisfaction, suggesting that happy people become more satisfied not simply because they feel better but because they develop resources for living well. Kuppens, Realo & Diener (2008) suggested that negative emotional experiences were more negatively related to life satisfaction in individualistic than in collectivistic nations, and positive emotional experiences had a larger positive relationship with life satisfaction in nations that stress self-expression than in nations that value survival. Job stress has negative effects on life satisfaction whereas job satisfaction has positive effects on life satisfaction. (Lian, Lin & Wu, 2007) Life dissatisfaction has a long-term effect on the risk of suicide, and this seems to be

partly mediated through poor health behavior. Life satisfaction seems to be a composite health indicator. (Honkanen et al., 2001).

Rationale of the Study

Self esteem and Life satisfaction play a greater role in human development. Hence the purview of research on self esteem and life satisfaction are getting broad. Several researches have shown that there are some factors which influenced self esteem and life satisfaction. Studies suggest that psycho-sociological factors like social support, self efficacy, interpersonal relationships, social perception etc have influence on self esteem as well as on life satisfaction. Basing upon the emergence of the issues the current study primarily aimed to assess the relationship between self esteem and life satisfaction and the differences exist due to gender and different socio-economic statuses among University Students.

Objectives

I.   To investigate the relationship between Self esteem and Life satisfaction among University students.
II. Find out gender difference in relation to self esteem and life satisfaction.
III. To assess the difference between low, moderate and high socio-economic status on self esteem and life satisfaction of university students.

Hypothesis

I.   There is a relationship between self esteem and life satisfaction.
II. There is gender difference in relation to self esteem and life satisfaction.
III. Different socio-economic status may remit in different levels of self esteem and life satisfaction.

Method of Study

Plan & Design

The current study aimed to assess the role of gender and socio-economic status (SES) on self esteem and life satisfaction of University students. Also the study focused on the relationship between self esteem and life satisfaction of University students. The study embodied a 2 genders (Male & Female) ×3SES (Low, Moderate and High SES) factorial

design. The sample for this study was collected from the students of different departments of Utkal University and Ravenshaw University. As per the data required the sample was collected from 6 different groups of student.

Table 1.Plan and Design of the study

Gender	Groups	Samples
Male	High socio-economic status	20
	Moderate socio-economic status	20
	Low socio-economic status	20
Female	High socio-economic status	20
	Moderate socio-economic status	20
	Low socio-economic status	20
Gender	Groups	Total Samples
2	6	120

Participants

The sample for the research was taken from the students of Utkal University and Ravenshaw University. Purposive sampling method was used to collect data. It was used as per the availability of the samples within a short span of time. On the basis of male students having high, moderate and low socio-economic statuses and female students having high, moderate and low socio-economic statuses 120 samples were collected. Among them 60 are male and 60 are female, the mean age was 22.5 (among 20-25 yrs). The sample then divided into 6 different groups. Each group was having 20 students.

Research Instruments

The following research instruments were used by the researcher to assess the self esteem and life satisfaction of university students.

(a) Self Esteem Inventory

Self Esteem Inventory was developed by Stanley Coopersmith in 1967.The scale consists of 25 items, these items are marked by two point rating scale "Like me" and "Unlike me" to score the items. The reliability and validity of Self Esteem Inventory are .62 and .82 respectively.

(b) Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) is a measure of life satisfaction developed by Ed Diener and colleagues (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985). The SWLS consists of 5-items that are completed by the individual whose life satisfaction is being measured. . It is a five-item scale assessing the cognitive-judgmental component of subjective well-being. Items were rated on a 7-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), with higher scores indicating higher life satisfaction.

Procedure

At first the researcher decided upon the sample size, the age group and different socio-economic background in order to collect data. The participants in this study were the students from the various departments of the Utkal University and Ravenshaw University. The collected sample consisted of divergent cultural, regional and socio-economic background. The researcher took the prior permission from the participants who participated in the study. After that rapport was established with the participants, they were requested to fill the details of the personal profile and to respond or answer in the answer sheet. Later then provided a self esteem inventory questionnaire to the participants. The participants were instructed to analyse each item according to their subjective feelings.

After completion of self esteem questionnaire, the satisfaction with life scale was given to the participants. Satisfaction with life scale consisted of 5 items and a 7 point rating scale where '7' is the maximum and '1' is the minimum. The participants were instructed to quote each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. During the time of administration of both of the tests it was made sure that the participants were comfortable. Where ever the participants were not able to understand, the researcher helped the participants.

Results

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between self esteem and life satisfaction of University students. It also assessed the role of gender and different socio-economic statuses on self esteem and life satisfaction.

Table 2.Correlation between Self esteem and Life satisfaction of University Students

Variables	Self esteem	Life satisfaction
Life satisfaction	.553**	____
	(3.75, 5.29)	

Note. *N*=120. Higher scores indicate a greater magnitude of each variable. Figures in the brackets represent *SDs*.**$p < .01$

Table:-2.is describing the inter correlation matrices of two variables. Analysis of correlation matrices table has shown that the correlation between self esteem and life satisfaction was (*r* = .553), which was significant at .001 levels (*p* < .01). It indicated that as self esteem of University Students increased Life Satisfaction also increased.

Table No:-3 ANOVA Performed on University Students' Score for Self Esteem

Sources	df	MS	F	Level of Significance
Gender	1	88.408	10.51**	0.01
Socio-Economic Status (SES)	2	301.075	35.82**	0.01
Gender X SES	2	15.108	1.79	NS
Error	114	8.405		

Note :(** *p* < .01)

Table No. 3 showed that a significant main effect found for Gender on Self esteem scores of University Students, F (1, 114)= 10.51, *p< 0.01.* Socio-Economic Status (SES) has also a significant main effect on Self esteem, F (2, 114) = 35.82, *p< 0.01.* There was no significant interaction effect found for Gender and SES.

Table No:-4 Mean and SD of University Students' Score for Self Esteem across Gender and Socio-Economic Status (SES)

	Male			Female			Combined		
	M	**SD**	**N**	**M**	**SD**	**N**	**M**	**SD**	**N**
Low SES	13.65	3.20	20	14.95	2.92	20	14.30	3.09	40
Moderate SES	14.75	2.46	20	17.85	3.40	20	16.30	3.33	40
High SES	19.35	2.92	20	20.10	2.31	20	19.72	2.63	40
Combined	15.92	3.77	60	17.63	3.57	60	16.78	3.75	120

Table:-4 revealed that Females University Students were higher in Self esteem (M=17.63) compared to the Male counterparts (M=15.92). Comparison of mean scores of Low, moderate and High SES University Students revealed that High SES University Students showed a higher level of Self esteem (M=19.72) than the Moderate SES University Students (M=16.30) and Low SES University Students (14.30). The mean score comparison finally revealed that Female High SES University Students (M=20.10) had the highest level of Self esteem as compared to Male High SES University Students (M=19.35), Female Moderate SES University Students (M=17.85), Female Low SES University Students (M=14.95), Male Moderate SES University Students (14.75) and Male Low SES University Students (13.65)

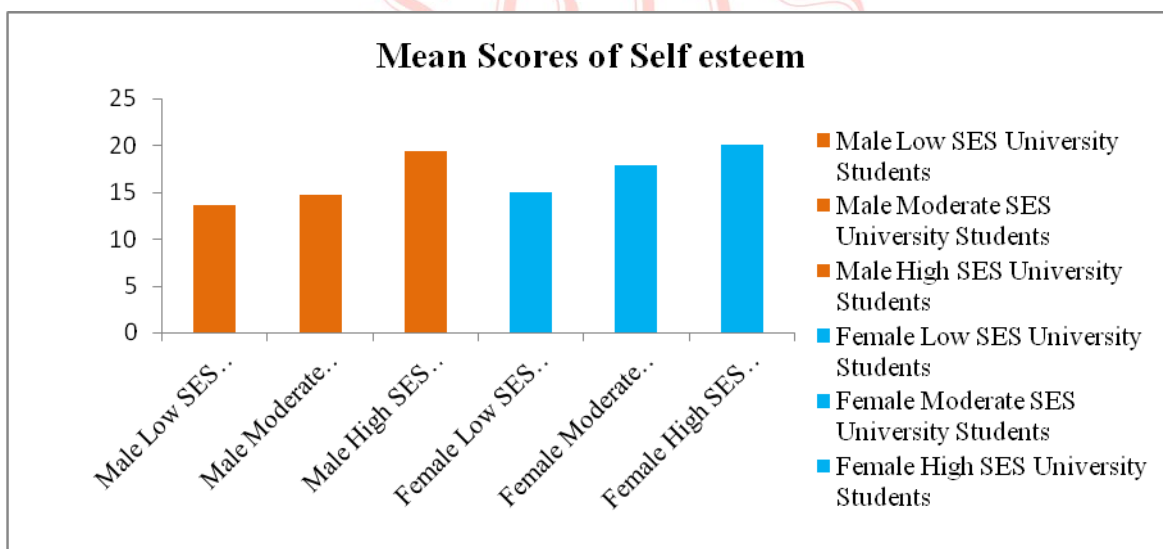Figure:-1 Mean Scores of group of students in relation to Self esteem

Table No:-5 ANOVA Performed on University Students' Score for Life Satisfaction

Sources	df	MS	F	Level of Significance
Gender	1	261.075	11.56**	0.01
Socio-Economic Status (SES)	2	157.300	6.97**	0.01
Gender X SES	2	91.200	4.04*	0.05
Error	114	22.569		

Note :(** *p < .01, * p< .05*)

Table No. 5 showed that a significant main effect found for Gender on Life Satisfaction scores of University Students, $F(1, 114)= 11.56, p< 0.01$. Socio-Economic Status (SES) has also a significant main effect on Self esteem, $F(2, 114) = 6.97, p< 0.01$. There was also significant interaction effect found for Gender and SES, $F(2, 114) = 4.04, p< 0.05$.

Table No:-6 Mean and SD of University Students' Score for Life Satisfaction across Gender and Socio-Economic Status (SES)

	Male			Female			Combined		
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N
Low SES	18.90	4.37	20	24.65	4.41	20	21.78	5.22	40
Moderate SES	22.85	5.64	20	26.20	3.45	20	24.53	4.92	40
High SES	25.75	5.35	20	25.50	4.92	20	25.63	5.08	40
Combined	22.50	5.80	60	25.45	4.28	60	23.98	5.29	120

Table:-6 revealed that Females University Students were higher in Life Satisfaction (M=25.45) compared to the Male counterparts (M=22.50). Comparison of mean scores of Low, moderate and High SES University Students revealed that High SES University Students showed a higher level of Life Satisfaction (M=25.63) than the Moderate SES University Students (M=24.53) and Low SES University Students (21.78). The mean score comparison also revealed that Female Moderate SES University Students (M=26.20) had the

highest level of Life Satisfaction as compared to Male High SES University Students (M=25.75), Female High SES University Students (M=25.50), Female Low SES University Students (M=24.65), Male Moderate SES University Students (22.85) and Male Low SES University Students (18.90).

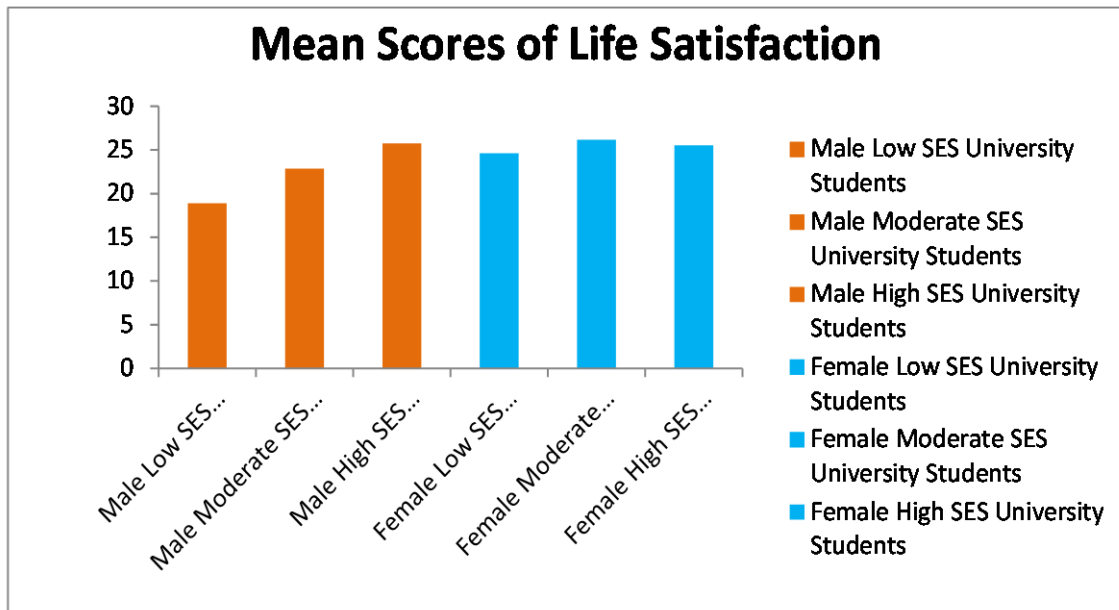Figure:-2 Mean Scores of group of students in relation to Life satisfaction
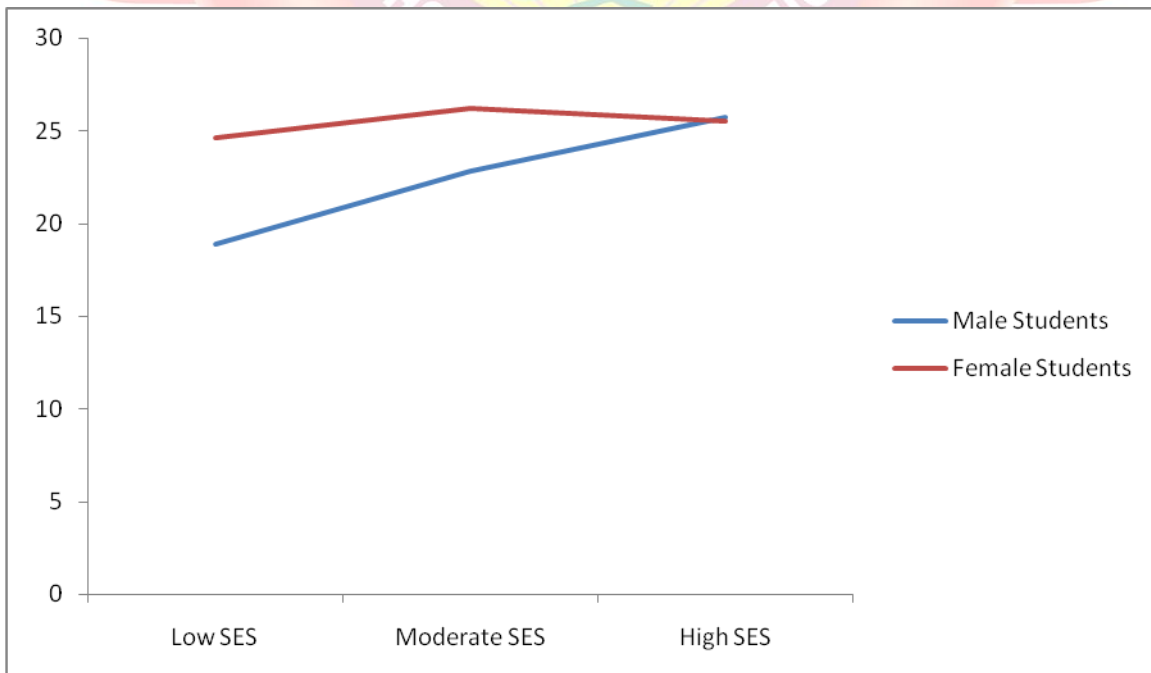

Figure:-3 Interaction graph of different groups in relation to Life satisfaction

Discussion & Conclusion

The main purpose of the present study was to examine (i) relationship between self esteem and life satisfaction, (ii) the gender difference in relation to self esteem and life satisfaction and (iii) the different socio-economic statuses having an impact on self esteem and life satisfaction of University students. In this regard Self esteem Inventory and Satisfaction with life scale were administered on university students aged between 20 to 25 years.

Analysis of results showed that there was a significantly positive relationship between self- esteem and life satisfaction of university students. The result suggested that as self esteem of students increased, the life satisfaction also increased. Self esteem is a reflection of a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth. The person who adequately evaluates his or her worth is able to be satisfied with his or her life. Self esteem acts as a booster of life satisfaction. Higher the self esteem, the more the satisfaction in life. A study conducted by Arslan, Hamarta and Uslu(2010) showed that self esteem is positively correlated with confrontation, emotional expression, self-disclosure and life satisfaction. It also revealed that life satisfaction is positively correlated with confrontation, emotional expression and self-disclosure. Both self esteem and life satisfaction terms are related with individual's positive feelings. For this reason it is expected that the individual who have high self esteem also have high levels of life satisfaction. In other similar studies a positive relationship was found to exist between self esteem and life satisfaction in other studies analyzing the relationship between the two (Diener, 1984; Emmons & Diener,1985; McCoy & Heritage;1992; Diener & Diener, 1995; Lucas et al., 1996; Yetim, 2002; Deniz, 2006; Chen et al., 2006; Çeçen, 2008).

Males and females significantly differed when it came to self esteem and life satisfaction. Result suggested that females are having more self esteem than males. Also the study suggests that females were more satisfied with their lives in compared to males. During the period of early adulthood both male and female are facing transitional problems relating to jobs, marriages, taking over household responsibilities etc. Compared to western culture in Indian culture pressures more on male rather than female to get job and take responsibilities. Failure to accommodate with the demands of society may lead to a lower level of self esteem among male. Thus the lower the self esteem the lower the life satisfaction. But, females show a lesser pressure in relation to job responsibilities during this period. They are supposed to be

home maker rather than earning for the family. This leads to develop better a family and social support, which further results in showing high levels of self esteem and life satisfaction. Females have greater social support, higher satisfaction in relation to household responsibilities.

From the analysis of result it was also found that students from different socio-economic statuses (low, moderate, and high) have different levels of self esteem and life satisfaction. Socioeconomic status is based on family income, parental education level, parental occupation, and social status in the community (such as contacts within the community, group associations, and the community's perception of the family) Demarest et.al (1993). An individual from a low socio-economic status has lesser access over the resources which are very much essential for maintaining a normal life. For example, an individual from low socio-economic status gets least amount of social support, education ,poor medical facilities and a minimal family income this leads an individual to negatively self evaluate or experience low self esteem, which further leads to lower life satisfaction. An individual from a moderate socio-economic status background shows a mixed result of self esteem and life satisfaction. Limited availability of resources may lead to underdevelopment of both internal and external potentials such as, inadequate positive self perception, self confidence, self esteem, self efficacy etc. The all round development of an individual is hampered due to the less choices. It results in bringing lower levels of self esteem and life satisfaction. Findings suggest that though there was a difference between low and moderate socio-economic status background students but, the difference was minimal. The students from high socio-economic status showed high levels of self esteem and life satisfaction, because of the greater choices on resources, rich social support, better education and huge income, which boosts the levels of self esteem and life satisfaction.

It was hypothesised that there was a relationship between self esteem and life satisfaction, there is gender difference in relation to self esteem and life satisfaction and different socio-economic status may remit in different levels of self esteem and life satisfaction. The results of the study supported all hypothesises. In conclusion both self esteem and life satisfaction are correlated as they are related to positive feelings of individuals. Gender difference exists in self esteem and life satisfaction due to different transitional problems, diverse responsibility and availing social support. And, finally socio-economic status influence self esteem and life satisfaction. Difference socio-economic status remits different levels of self esteem and life satisfaction.

Implications

I.   This study will helpful to the students who have low levels of self esteem and life satisfaction.

II. This study can be a supportive document for some interventional programmes regarding the enhancement of self esteem and Life satisfaction.

III. The findings of study can be used as an illustration of the role of gender and socio-economic status on an individual's self esteem and life satisfaction.

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