ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Association of Self-Esteem with Gender and Medical Year: A Cross Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Background: Self-esteem, evaluation of an individual about themselves, is substantially owed to the fact that how one is perceived by other individuals, makes up a perception regarding them.

Aim: To determine the association of self-esteem with regards to gender and medical year of students.

Methodology: A cross sectional observational study was carried on medical students of Liaquat Medical Hospital Jamshoro which included students from second to fifth year. To determine self-esteem, Rosenberg self-esteem scales (RSES) was utilized which is regarded highly reliable and valid tool for quantitative assessment of self-esteem. SPSS version 20 was used for data analysis. Demographics included age, gender, educational year, family system. For qualitative variables, frequency and percentages were reported. Multivariate analysis of associations' in-between students' characteristics and self-esteem were recorded keeping p-value of <0.05 as statistically significant.

Results: From total 240 medical students, 63.7% were females and 36.3% males. Majority, 52.5% of students were 22 years or above. 41.3% of students were from fourth year and 28.3% from third year. 63.9% students lived in joint families. A significant association of self-esteem was reported in 4th versus 2nd year medical students (p-0.023). All other year students were observed to have insignificant association with self-esteem as well as in terms of age, gender and family system.

Conclusion: Association of self-esteem only in-between fourth year and second year medical students was found to be significant, while in other years as well as with gender, the association of self-esteem was reported to be insignificant.

Keywords: Self-esteem, Stress, Depression, Medical students

INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem, evaluation of an individual about themselves, is substantially owed to the fact that how one is perceived by other individuals and makes up a perception regarding them[1]. As such, feedback's quality that is attained from the social environment tends to have a substantial effect on a person's functioning. Therefore, a negative feedback leads to detrimental consequences on one's self-esteem[2]. As a result, it might be logically sound to have an assumption regarding self-esteem to be a powerful source in the fight against suicidal tendencies and social stressors[3].

Studies have reported to show an inverse relationship in-between social life stressors and self-esteem. Amongst psychiatric diseases such as depression and anxiety, especially depression, has been frequently linked with noticeable deficiencies in self-esteem[4]. The association of depression and self-esteem could either be contributing to low self-esteem or be a constant source of low self-esteem or be aftermath of depression[5]. The complexity is as such that it is important to identify the cause of such self-esteem, to tackle it accordingly. Low self-esteem is regarded as the most severe, commonly observed factor among depressed patients and strong predictor for suicidal tendency. Consequently, improvement in mental health and tackling stressors and depression to affect a person's self-esteem is pivotal for betterment of the person's self-esteem[6].

Not only others perception of a person affects their self-esteem, occurrence of any negative event in life also important in determining self-esteem. In adaptation to a negative event and turning it into positive future is of utmost importance[7]. It depends upon sentiments, considerations as well as practices of the individual. Self-esteem, the measurement of an individual's worthiness in their own eyes also impacts on how they reach to upsetting situations[8]. A high self-esteem is described as a valuable asset in adaptations for positivity in life. Studies have reported that high self-esteem in medical students showed better results not only in academics as well as extra-curricular activities[9].

Students with depressive symptoms have shown to have a negative performance at medical school as well as a lower self-esteem than non-depressive students who performed better[10]. It is seen that the medical field requires hard work day in and day out regardless of the circumstances, however negative events in life or poor self-esteem of a medical student, leads to detrimental effect on academic performance as well as the mental health of the student[11]. Therefore it is highly important to identify such students with self-esteem issues and not only determine the cause of the negative performance but through proper guidance, help them to tackle those issues and overcome them[12]. However, this area of specialty has been highly under looked in countries such as Pakistan, where high prevalence of depression and anxiety along with low self-esteem has been seen especially among medical students. The existing literature is scarce to determine any progress on the self-esteem issues among medical students.

The objective of the study was to determine the association of self-esteem with regards to gender and medical year of students.

METHODOLOGY

This cross sectional observational study was carried out on the medical students of Liaquat Medical Hospital Jamshoro which included students from second to fifth year. The total number of students amounted to 240. The students belonged to middle or higher socio-economic background. To determine self-esteem of the medical students, Rosenberg self-esteem scales (RSES) was utilized which is a widely used scale in social-science researches. The scale made use of different measurements of self-esteem through questioning respondents regarding their current feelings. RSES is regarded as a highly reliable and valid tool for quantitative assessment of self-esteem.

SPSS version 20 was used for data analysis. Reported demographics included age, gender, educational year, family system i.e., joint family or nuclear. For qualitative varitables, frequency and percentages were reported. Multivariate analysis of associations' in-between students' characteristics and self-esteem were recorded keeping p-value of <0.05 as statistically significant.

RESULTS

Data of total 240 participants were analyzed for the study. Out of these 240 students, 114(47.5%) were up to 21 years old while 126(52.5%) were 22 years old or older; 87(36.3%) were male while 153(63.75) were female; 25(10.4%) were in 2nd year, 68(28.3%) were in 3rd year, 99(41.3%) were in 4th year while 48(20%) were in 5th year; and 86 (36.1%) lived in nuclear family while 152(63.9%) lived in joint family system (Table 1).

Table 1: Participants Profile (n=238)

Variables (n=240)	Count (%)
Age	
Up to 21 Years	114 (47.5)
22 Years or Above	126 (52.5)
Gender	
Male	87 (36.3)
Female	153 (63.7)
Educational Year	
2nd Year	25 (10.4)
3rd Year	68 (28.3)
4th Year	99 (41.3)
5th Year	48 (20.0)
Family System[1]	
Nuclear	86 (36.1)
Joint	152 (63.9)

The result of multivariable analysis of associations between participant characteristics and self-esteem revealed that among participant's age, gender, educational year and family system only educational year was significantly associated with the self-esteem of the participants where students who were in 4th year had significantly higher odds of having normal/high self-esteem than students who were in 2nd year (AOR 3.252, 95% CI 1.180, 8.964, p=0.023).Moreover, females were found to have higher odds of having normal/high self-esteem than males while those living in nuclear family were found to have higher odds of having normal/high self-esteem than those living in joint family system, though the odds were statistically non-significant in both these instances (Table 2).

Table 2: Multivariable Analysis of Associations between Participant Characteristics and Self-Esteem

Variables	OR (95% CI)	p
Age (Up to 21 Years vs. 22 Years and above)	1.130 (0.549, 2.329)	0.74
Gender (Female vs. Male)	1.499 (0.778, 2.888)	0.227
Academic Year (3rd vs. 2nd)	1.899 (0.686, 5.255)	0.217
Academic Year (4th vs. 2nd)	3.252 (1.180, 8.964)	0.023
Academic Year (5th vs. 2nd)	3.286 (0.946, 11.417)	0.061
Family System (Nuclear vs. Joint)	1.733 (0.885, 3.397)	0.109

DISCUSSION

In discussing self-esteem, stress and depression, they all impart a vital role in a person's life specifically when being in pressurized environments[13]. The current study showed that the association in-between student's age (up to 21 years and above) and self-esteem was insignificant (p-0.74). Similarly the association in-between gender with self-esteem i.e. between females and males was also reported to be insignificant (p-0.227). Likewise association of self-esteem in 3rd versus 2nd year medical students was also observed to be insignificant (p-0.217). A significant association was recorded in terms of self-esteem in 4th versus 2nd year medical students (p-0.023). Association of self-esteem in 5th versus 2nd year medical students was observed to be insignificant (p-0.061). Similarly, the association of self-esteem in terms of family system, i.e., nuclear versus joint family system was reported to be insignificant (p-0.109).

Medical students of fourth year were seen to have better or normal self-esteem in comparison to lower year students. In any way, transiting from high school to a university possesses a major challenge and is a life changer[14]. Beginning of university life might become source of stress and strain however, acutely. A study reported that students having high stress reported normal self-esteem. In university life, an academic demand tends to be ever-increasing on the students[15]. Although the issue of stress and self-esteem is a major one, yet scarce literature is available in Pakistan regarding the demographic variability's of stress and self-esteem among medical students specially[16]. A lot of research is required in this field especially among medical students so that health professionals can improve their self-esteem and acquire qualities to better cope with stress[17]. And so different mental health issues can also be identified and dealt with especially in terms of age, gender and educational years[18]. Among few Pakistani studies but on general population, middle aged individuals were reported to be at higher risk for self-esteem problems, depression and anxiety diseases in the country[19]. Another study reported that females show more pre-disposition to stress and self-esteem issues than male[20]. However a contrasting study found males to have higher pre-dominance than females[21]. Nonetheless, in our study and others as well, the ratio of male to female was unequal to determine an accurate association. An

astonishing finding of a study reported educated, master's level individuals to be at higher risk for stress and self-esteem issues than individuals with lower levels of education[22].

Limitations of the study: Single centered study with limited sample size, imbalance between males and females, observer and selection bias were few of the limitations found in the study. However further multi-centered studies determined to identify the causes of low self-esteem and how to diagnose and counter the issues must be carried out on a larger scale to be applied upon the higher set of population.

CONCLUSION

According to the results of the study, the association of self-esteem only in-between fourth year and second year medical students were found to be significant, while in other years as well as with gender, the association of self-esteem was reported to be insignificant.

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