

“A Study on Gender Equality and Self-Esteem of Post Graduate Students”

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ABSTRACT

The present study entitled “*A Study on Gender Equality and Self-Esteem of Post Graduate Students*” investigates the intricate relationship between gender equality and self-esteem among students pursuing postgraduate studies at Mysore University. The research is grounded in the recognition that gender equality and self-esteem are fundamental indicators of human development, social progress, and individual well-being. Gender equality, enshrined in the Constitution of India and reinforced through national policies and international frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-5), ensures equal rights, opportunities, and responsibilities irrespective of gender. Similarly, self-esteem, defined as an individual’s evaluation of self-worth and personal value, plays a critical role in shaping decision-making, motivation, resilience, and mental health.

The study adopts a descriptive survey design with a sample of 200 postgraduate students drawn through stratified random sampling from different departments of Mysore University. The research employs a researcher-constructed Gender Equality Scale, focusing on domains such as language, family interaction, media, literature, culture, and upbringing, alongside the standardized Self-Esteem Scale developed by Dhar and Dhar (2015). Statistical analyses, including percentage analysis and t-tests, were utilized to assess levels and differences across gender.

Findings reveal that while the majority of students displayed average levels of gender equality and self-esteem, significant gender differences emerged in self-esteem but not in gender equality. Specifically, male and female students were found to hold similar perceptions of gender equality, but female students scored significantly higher in self-esteem compared to their male counterparts. These results highlight the complex interplay between societal norms, gender roles, and individual self-perceptions in shaping the experiences of young adults in higher education.

The study has important educational implications. It underscores the need for equitable classroom opportunities, gender-sensitive curriculum practices, and the promotion of cooperative learning strategies. Additionally, it emphasizes the role of extracurricular engagement, media awareness, and motivational interventions in enhancing self-esteem among students, particularly those with lower levels of self-confidence. Strengthening gender equality and fostering positive self-esteem can create inclusive educational environments that empower students to achieve their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

In conclusion, the research reaffirms that sustainable social development is possible only when gender equality and self-esteem are cultivated together. Equal opportunities and recognition of both genders, coupled with efforts to nurture students’ confidence and self-worth, are vital for building a progressive, balanced, and inclusive society.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Self-Esteem, Postgraduate Students, Higher Education.

INTRODUCTION

"Is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. A bird can't

fly on only one wing."

-Swami Vivekanda

Women were put in place as keystones in the dome of India society. Women in the Rig-Vedic period relished with high status in society. According to Katyayana and Patanjali, women were properly educated in the early Vedic period. Women had a great opportunity to acquire high intellectual and spiritual standards of their own. Numerous historians claim that women experienced a 'golden age' during the Vedic period. Girls could be educated, widow remarriage was common, and women had the freedom to choose their spouse (Swayamvara). Women were sages like Vac, Ambhrini, Romasa, Khona and many more highly intellectual scholars (Brahmavadinis). There were women rishis Ghosha, Lopamudra, Sulabhamaitreyi, Gargi, Godha, Adhiti, Indrani, etc. In this period women had economic freedom, women were engaged in different occupations like teaching, spinning, weaving, production, and agriculture field. It was evidenced that the countless examples of women like Kaykayi, Sita, Rukmini, Urmila, Savitri, Sathyabhama, Savitri, and many more were a symbol of expression of courage, strong willpower, and bravery.

As time passed women started experiencing low status in the Post-Vedic period due to rigid restrictions urged by the caste system. As a consequence, women had to undergo serious issues like lack of education facilities, pre-puberty marriage, confinement to domestic work, and the sati system. As the medieval period started and proved that this era was sunset for women. Women started to struggle for their identity, and many social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda, and Swami Dayananda Saraswati were to help women to protect from the evils of society.

Presently the constitution of India ensures equality for all women (article, 14), equity of opportunity (article, 16) special provisions in favour of women & children (article, 15[3]), etc., "The status of women in modern India is a sort of a paradox. If on one hand, she is at the peak of the ladder of success, on the other hand, she is mutely suffering the violence afflicted on her by her family members. Compared with the past women in modern times have achieved a lot but in reality, they have to still travel along way. Their path is full of roadblocks. The women have left the secured domain of their home and are now on the battlefield of life, fully armored with their talent. They had proven themselves. But in India, they are yet to get their dues. The sex ratio of India shows that Indian society is still prejudiced against females. There are 933 females per thousand males in India according to the census of 2001, which is below the world average of 990 females. There are many problems that women in India have to go through daily. These problems have become the part and parcel of the life of Indian women and some of them have accepted them as their fate" (Shashi, 2017).

Gender Equality:

Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, girls and boys. Gender equality is achieved when the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured and do not give rise to different consequences that reinforce inequalities (OCHA gender toolkit). The concept of gender equality is that women and men, girls and boys have equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for realizing their full potential, human rights and dignity, and for contributing to (and benefitting from) economic, social, cultural and political development. Gender equality is, therefore, the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play. It is based on women and men being full partners in the home, community and society. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men and girls and boys are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups and that all human beings are free to develop their abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes and prejudices about gender roles. Gender equality is a matter of human rights and is considered a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development. (Unicef-Nov 2017).

The 2030 agenda for Sustainable development places gender equality and the empowerment of women and

girls at the heart of its implementation with its promise to "leave no one behind". It provides an unprecedented opportunity to transform the lives of women and girls and to catalyze progress towards sustainable developments in all dimensions: economic, social and environmental. With its universal and transformative mandate, the 2030 agenda outlines a set of 17 integrated sustainable development goals (SDGs) and targets to achieve our common aspiration for a more equitable and inclusive worlds. Gender equality must be addressed in its own right and as a catalyst for progress across the SDGs. The 2030 agenda for sustainable development calls for integrated responses to the social, economic and environmental challenges facing us today.

As show in figure-1, goal 5 is the stand-alone goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Its targets emphasize the removal of barriers to achieving gender equality and address issues that catalyze the achievement of the other goals in the framework. SDG goal 5 9 targets (from the 2030 Agenda) and 14 indicators are described in table no 1.

Table No 1:

Goals and targets (from the 2030 Agenda)	Indicators
1. End all forms of discrimination women and girls against all everywhere	1.1. whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination based on sex
2. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	2.1. Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older physical, subjected to or sexual psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by the form of violence and by age. 2.2. Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence.
3. Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.	3.1. Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18. 3.2. Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting by age.
4. Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.	4.1. Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location.
5. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political,economic and public life.	5.1. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments. 5.2. Proportion of women in managerial positions.
6. Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed by the programme of	6.1. Proportion of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health

action of the international conference on population and developments and the Beijing platform for action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.	care.
7. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, by national laws.	6.2. Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee women aged 15-49 years access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education.
	7.1. (a) the proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure.
	7.2. Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
8. Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.	8.1. Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex.
9. Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.	9.1. Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment.

The gender equality principle as a concept come to be enshrined in the constitution of India in its preamble, fundamental rights, fundamental duties and directive principles. Equality is ensured there without cast, creed, sex, or religion. The 5th five year plan (1974-78) only approach towards women issues shows a shift from a welfare approach to a developmental approach. Government of India statutory body and commission: the government of India has several statutory bodies and commissions related to gender equality and women empowerment.

The government from time to time implemented policies for the skill development and employability of women. In this regard, we may mention about training and employment programme (STEP) for women scheme which was introduced in 1986-87. Sectors like fishery, animal husbandry, dairy, sericulture, wasteland development, handloom, handicraft etc.

Self-Esteem:

Self-esteem is also one of the components of self-concept. According to the APA dictionary of psychology self-esteem is the degree to which the qualities and characteristics contained in one's self-concept are perceived to be positive. It reflects a person's physical. Self-image, view of his or her accomplishments and capabilities, values and perceived success in living up to them, as well as how others view and respond to that person. The more positive the cumulative perception of these qualities and characteristics, the higher one's self-esteem. A reasonably high degree of self-esteem is considered an important of mental health, whereas low self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness are common depressive symptoms. Self-esteem is often considered as the affective or emotional aspect of self and generally alludes to how one feels about and values himself or herself. This is sometimes used as a synonym for self-worth.

Following are some definitions of self-esteem:-

- Self-esteem is the judgment one makes about their self-concept. Self-concept refers to the attributes one has (Gail McEachron-1993)

- Self-esteem was measurable via assessing a subject's attitude about themselves as a "thing". (Dr. Morris)
- Self-esteem is to the extent to which individual respect himself/herself and considers himself/herself to be worthy. (Rosenberg-1965)
- Self-esteem is also defined as a global barometer of self-evaluation involving cognitive appraisals about general self-worth and affective experience of the self that are linked to these global appraisals (Murphy, Stosny and Morrel, 2005).

Self-esteem refers to a person's beliefs about their worth and value. It also has to do with the feelings people experience that follow from their sense of worthiness or unworthiness. Self-esteem comes from learning to accept who we are by seeing the insufficiencies and still choosing to like ourselves. According to Madelyn swift, our emotional health depends on our self-esteem (Sherie). Liking ourselves and feeling capable are the foundations on which emotional health rests. Self-esteem is important because it heavily influences people's choice and decision. In other words, self-esteem serves a motivational function by making it more or less likely that people will take care of themselves and explore their full potential. People with high self-esteem are also people who are motivated to take care of themselves and persistently strive towards the fulfillment of personal goals and aspirations. People with lower self-esteem don't tend to regard themselves as worthy of happy outcomes or capable of achieving them and so tend to let important things slide and be less persistent and resilient in terms of overcoming adversity. They may have the same kinds of goals as people with higher self-esteem, but they are generally less motivated to pursue them to their conclusion.

Need And Significance Of The Study:

With evidence one can say that every human being in this world is equal, both men and women play an equally responsible role in the erection of society. Under the roof of globalization, any individual can take a step ahead socially, culturally, politically, legally and economically irrespective of race, gender, caste and creed. Some of the international organizations like UNO, ECOSOC, IWC, IUCN, IAEA, WTO, ICJ, and UNESCO have got established to enhance the people to have a good quality of life and deal with their life issues (related to any aspect if life).

The ministry of women and child development, GOI, developed the national policy for the empowerment of women in 2001. The major objective of this policy is to "create an environment through positive economic and social policies for the full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential". The operational strategies and action plan include gender sensitization through a review of curriculum and educational materials to include gender education and human rights issues.

The national commission for women (NCW) was set up as a statutory body in January 1992 under the national commission for women act, 1990 with a mandate to safeguard the constitutional rights of women. In keeping with its mandate, the commission has, from time to time taken various initiatives for gender awareness and sensitization in the society regarding the rights of women. The NCW has developed a module in 2019 for gender sensitization and legal awareness for class XI and class XII students in collaboration with the kendriyavidyalayasanghatan. The module consisted of topics on sex vs. Gender, social construction of Gender, Gender Roles, Gender Stereotypes, Gender division of labor, Patriarchy, masculinity, ending violence against girls/ women: Advancing safety and rights and Gender Equality. Gender sensitization aims at making people aware of the relations between men and women in society and understanding the significance of affording women and men equal opportunities.

Our nation is not behind in this regard in protecting and safeguarding the citizens of the country. The constitution is the supreme law of the country and made all the provisions for every citizen. The preamble to the Indian constitution declares that India is a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic and republic. The impartial aspects of the preamble are to secure justice, liberty and equality for all citizens and promote fraternity to maintain the unity and integrity of the nation.

Despite all the provisions. It has been evidenced that such incidents in our society are related to the issues like gender discrimination, gender inequality and so on. India was placed at 123 positions in the gender inequality index (2019 survey) and the report noted that the labour force participation rate of women in the country was 20.5% despite the high growth rate and plentiful government measures to encourage gender equality, the gender gap still exists in India. Lack of gender equality not only limits women's access to resources and opportunities but also imperils the life of prospects of the future generation (sumanjeet 2016). If this continues then there are chances of unbalancing the structure of the society itself, as a consequence, we may face of same serious issues of female low literacy rate, lower educational attainment of women, child labour and so on.

Our beliefs about ourselves are important in shaping all kinds of important decisions, such as what colleges we apply to, which career paths we choose, and whether we are willing to contribute ideas in the workplace or try to compete for a promotion (Coffman, 2021) Formal educational does not solve all problems, but it is of crucial relevance. recent studies conducted on self-esteem reveal that women display lower self-efficacy the men across almost, though not all, achievement situations (Bleidorn et al., 2015). The effect is noted to begin in early adolescence and continues thought adulthood. The empirical validity of this outcome has been repeatedly tested and assessed as early as 1977 by lenney (1977). While the literature indicates that low self-esteem is indeed a frequent and potentially debilitating problem among women, they are not lower in self-esteem than in all achievement situations 9Bleidon et al., 2015).

From the review of related empirical studies, it is evident that there have been studies relating to women empowerment, gender sensitization, gender equality and self-esteem, there have been many training modules and policies emphasizing gender equality and women empowerment. But there have been no efforts made to find a relationship self-confidence towards gender equality and gender sensitization and its development. Hence in this context, the present study becomes significant.

Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the study.

- * To assess the level of gender equality among Post Graduate Students.
- * To assess the level of self-esteem among Post Graduate Students.
- * To find the difference in gender equality between male and female Post Graduate students.
- * To find the difference in self-esteem of male and female under Post Graduate Students.

Hypothesis of the study

- * There is no significant difference in gender equality between male and female Post graduate students.
- * There is no significant difference in self-esteem between male and female Post graduate students.

Variables

a) Criterion variable

1. Gender equality
2. Self-esteem

b) Background Variable

1. Gender
2. Stream

❖ Design of the study

The study is descriptive in nature. The survey technique was used to collect the data.

❖ Population and sampling procedure

The population of the present research is Post Graduate students of Mysore university (University campus) for the present study the stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample different Stream Department are selected for the study sample of 200 students from different Stream Department were taken. The sample compared of male and female studying in Post graduate students in Mysore University. The questionnaire of gender equality and self-esteem were used.

❖ Tools used for the study.

To study the major objectives, the tests developed were.

1. **Gender equality scale:** - The researcher constructed the tool. The researcher couldn't find the appropriate tool to study the gender equality of Post graduate students of Mysore university hence through the various theories researcher find out the components to frame questionnaire. The components are language, family interaction, media, literature, culture and upbringing.
2. **Self-esteem scale:** - The scale was developed by Dr. santhoshDhar and Dr. upinderDhar (2015). It refers to the Positivity, openness. Competence, humility, self- worth, learning orientation. The scale in English and includes 23 items. Students should record their responses in the blunt on the test sheet they should examine their responses thoroughly to make sure that they have made form marks which will enable to assess hemisphere dominance correctly.

❖ Statistical Analysis

- Percentage analysis
- T.test

• Objective-1

To assess the level of gender equality among Post graduate students.

In order to meet the objective 1 to assess the level of gender equality among Post graduate students, the percentage analysis technique was employed. The results are presented in the table 2.

Table: 2 The level of gender equality among Post graduate students

	No. of students	Percentage analysis
Above average	39	19.5%
Average	111	55.5%
Below average	50	25%
Total	200	100

From the above table the level of gender equality of under graduate students shows 39 students are above average, 111 students are average and 50 students are below average.

• Objective-2

To Assess the level of Self-esteem among Post Graduate students.

In order to meet the objective 2 to assess the level of Self-esteem among Post Graduate students, the percentage analysis technique was employed. The results are presented in the table 3.

Table: 3 The level of Self-esteem among Post Graduate students.

	No. of students	Percentage analysis
Above average	38	19%
Average	120	60%
Below average	42	21%
Total	200	100

From the above table the level of gender equality of post graduate students shows 38 students are above average, 120 students are average and 42 students are below average.

• Objective-3

- ✓ Difference in Gender equality between Male and Female post graduate students.
- ✓ In order to meet the objective to find whether there are any significance differences in gender equality between male and female post graduate students the following research hypotheses was framed, there in no significant differences in gender equality in between male and female post graduate students. To test these hypotheses the T-test was employed.

Table-4 Comparison of mean score of gender equality between male and female post graduate students.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S-D	DF	t-value		significant
Gender equality						ObtainedT-Value	Table T-Value	Significant difference
	Male	86	97.92	5.926	99.5	8.2	1.660	
	Female	114	121.97	30.45				

The table4. reveals that the obtained t-value is less than table t-value at 0.05 levels. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected hence the alternative hypotheses as accepted, hence there is significant difference in genders equality of male and female post graduate students.

Objective-4

- ✓ Comparison of mean score of self-esteem of male and female post graduate students.
- ✓ In order to meet the objective to find whether there is any significance differences in self-esteem of male and Female post graduate students the following research hypotheses was framed, there is no significant differences in self-esteem between male and female post graduate students. To test hypothesis, the T-test was employed.

Table 5. Comparison of mean score of self-esteem between male and female post graduate students.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S-D	DF	t-value		significant
Self Esteem						Obtained T-Value	TableT-Value	Significant difference
	Male	86	102.8	7.43	99.5	3.78	1.660	
	Female	114	106.97	8.09				

The table5 reveals that the obtained T-value is more than table-t-value at 0.05 levels therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected hence the alternative hypotheses as accepted; hence there is significant difference in self-esteem of male and female post graduate students.

Findings

There is significant difference in genders equality of male and female post graduate students.

There is significant difference in self-esteem of male and female post graduates students.

Educational Implications

- Provide equal opportunities in the classroom activities. Giving equal provisions to both the genders to express their views and thoughts.
- Explore gender concepts and roles from curriculum.
- Cooperative learning should be adopted to improve gender equality.
- Media plays a vital role in spreading awareness regarding gender equality.
- Students can gain self-esteem from involvement in activities they care about, the activities like sports, hobbies, art and craft and others.
- Self-esteem can be improved through motivating students to uplift their positive thoughts and encouraging their confidence.
- Students with low self-esteem can be identified and to improve their self-esteem measures should be taken like, engaging them with other classmates, social group activities and etc.

CONCLUSION

A society attains better development in all aspects when both genders are entitled to similar opportunities. Equal rights in decision making, health, politics, infrastructure, profession, etc will surely advance our society to a new level. In a society, everyone has the right to lead his/her life accordingly without any discrimination. When this state is achieved where all individuals are considered to be equal irrespective of their caste, gender, colour, profession, and status, we call it equality. Self-esteem is your opinion of yourself. People with healthy self-esteem like themselves and value their achievements. While everyone lacks confidence occasionally, people with low self-esteem feel unhappy or unsatisfied with themselves most of the time.

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