

# Gender Differences in Self-concept among Adolescent Students of Uttarakhand

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to determine gender differences, region of residence and type of management on the self-concept of adolescents. A random sampling method was followed. The sample consisted of 800 respondents studying in secondary and higher secondary schools of Uttarakhand. The data was collected personally through a questionnaire on self-concept developed by R.K.Saraswat. It consisted of 6 dimensions of self-concept. Results indicated that boys and girls did not differ on total self-concept. However, significant differences were found between the groups formed on the basis of region of residence and type of management with respect to their overall self-concept at 0.05 level of significance.*

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## Introduction

'Self' is one of the determinants of personality and contributes to the uniqueness of every individual. The concept of self has origin in the earliest history of personality theory. In the 17th century, the philosopher Descartes discussed the 'cogito' (awareness of one's own being) as the core of human existence. Sigmund Freud used the term 'ego' to refer to this organised aspect of personality. Allport used the term 'proprium' to refer to self and outlined eight stages in the development of proprium from infancy to adulthood.

According to Jung the 'self' is an archetype which develops during middle age and is the centre of the personality providing stability and equilibrium. However, self-concept is not innate but is developed through interaction with the environment (Brigham, 1986; James 1990). It is dynamic and can be modified due to interaction with various forces of environment in which the individual lives.

Self-concept is a comprehensive and exhaustive area which can represent the personality at large. It is a complex psychological construct. According to Carl Rogers (1959) it consists of the portion of personality which consists of the perception of 'I' and 'Me'. In

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other words, it refers to the ordered set of attitudes and perceptions that an individual holds about himself or herself. (Wolffe, 2000; Woolfolk, 2001; Tuttle and Tuttle, 2004; Rice and Dolgin, 2005). Several terms that are virtually synonymous with self-concept are self image (what the person is), ideal self (what the person wants to be) and self esteem (what the person feels about the discrepancy between what he is and what he would like to be).

Self-concept influences personality development of an individual in two ways. One is that if other people hold high positive attitude towards us, this enhances our self-image and self acceptance. The other is that if other hold negative attitude towards us, it creates feelings of worthlessness and consequently may lead to self defence or withdrawal from social situation. As has been found in various studies on adolescents, a positive self-concept may develop his personality to the fullest while a negative one may lead to disintegration of personality.

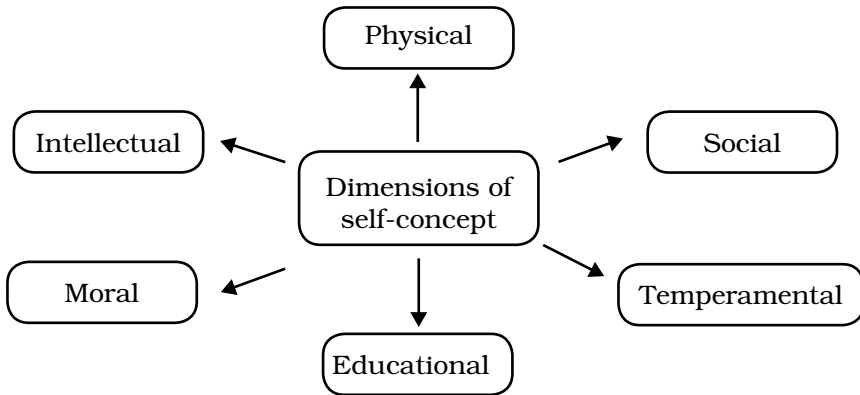
### **Rationale of the study**

Adolescents go through biological, cognitive, social and psychological transitions. Psychologically, adolescence develops a sense of identity, self-awareness and development of self-concept. This challenging period is also a period of gender differences. According to Gilligan (1990) societal pressure on girls demanding them to be perfect is the main cause of loss of self confidence and self esteem, thus contributing to psychological disturbances at times. Further, the emphasis to look attractive to be submissive and respectful to others reduces the self esteem of adolescent girls (Harter, 1993, 1997). In a study, young women scored lower than young men, especially from 12 years on when their self-confidence and acceptance of physical self-image decreases (Orenstien, 1994; Marsh and Hattie, 1996). Rothemberg (1997) indicated that girls over 12 years were more at risk of suffering from depression than young men. Hence, a need was felt to explore whether this attitude is still prevalent in the modern Indian society where a lot of awareness about gender equality has come into existence.

Adolescence has also been termed as a period of storm and stress. However, adolescence is not only synonymous with difficulty but also success in every field of life. The main task of the adolescent is to achieve a state of 'identity'. However, in a society like ours, it often leads to 'identity crises' and 'confusion'. The adolescents are more introspective. They believe that their parents can never

understand them as their problems are different. Some studies have revealed about stability of self-concept during adolescence while other studies have found instability. Contrary to this, a study by Rosenberg (1989) revealed that adolescents develop unhealthy self-concept than adults. Further, a study on the gender differences in low vision adolescents showed that females scored lower on social and moral dimensions of self-concept while higher on physical self-concept (Rothemburg, 1997; Mohammad Al-Zyouidi, 2007). Harter et al., (1997) who found that blind people showed extreme values, they either had a very low self-concept or overrated their personal attributes as compared to sighted people. In contrast, Peterson, Sarigiani and Kennedy (1991) indicated that blind males had positive self-concept than blind females. After reviewing numerous studies with varied results, a need was felt to study the self-concept of adolescents in the present scenario. In the present study, the variants or dimensions of self-concept include: physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual.

**Dimensions of self-concept in the present study**



**Figure 1**

- **Physical:** Physical self-concept is the individual’s view of the body, health, physical capacity, appearance and strength.
- **Social:** It refers to an individual’s sense of worth in social interactions.
- **Temperamental:** It is the individual’s view of prevailing emotional state or predominance of a particular kind of emotional reaction.
- **Educational:** It means the individual’s view of himself or herself in relation to school, teachers and extra-curricular activities.

- **Moral:** Moral self-concept is the individual's estimation of moral worth i.e. right or wrong.
- **Intellectual:** Intellectual self-concept is the individual's awareness of their intelligence and capacity of problem solving and judgement.

### **About Uttarakhand State**

Uttarakhand (formerly known as Uttaranchal) is the 27th state of India. It was established in 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2000. It is one of the extremely backward states of India. This state, which forms the north-west border area of the country, touching boundaries of Nepal and China, lies in the Central Zone of Himalayas. The state comprises of 13 districts out of which –Almora, Pithoragarh, Nainital, Bageshwar, Champawat and Udham Singh Nagar constitute Kumaun division and the remaining seven- Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Dehradun, Pauri Garhwal, Tehri Garhwal, Rudra Prayag and Haridwar are components of Garhwal division.

### **Delimitation**

1. The study was confined to secondary level students of Uttarakhand.
2. Students within the age group 13-17 years constituted the sample.
3. The study was conducted on the pupils of rural and urban background only.
4. The study was conducted on Public and Government school students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A study of gender differences in self-concept among adolescent students studying in secondary and higher secondary level schools of Uttarakhand.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To study the self-concept of students studying in secondary level.
2. To compare the development of self-concept of adolescent boys and girls.

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*The state of Uttarakhand covers an area of 53,566 sq. km. It touches the area of China, Nepal, Uttar-Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. According to 2011, India census its population is about 10,116,752. Its capital is Dehradun, which is noted for the number of prestigious institutions, schools and universities in Uttarakhand. District-wise achievement in level of education is found to be quite encouraging except the female literacy which is found to be relatively low in Tehri Garhwal, Chamoli and Uttarkashi.*

3. To compare the development of self-concept of urban and rural adolescents.
4. To compare the development of self-concept of Public School and Government School student.

### **Hypotheses**

**HO<sub>1</sub>**. Male and female students would not differ significantly on total self-concept and various dimensions of self-concept viz. physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual.

**HO<sub>2</sub>**. Urban students would not differ from rural students on total self-concept and various dimensions of self-concept viz. physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual.

**HO<sub>3</sub>**. Public School students would not differ from Government School students on total self-concept and various dimensions of self-concept viz. physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual.

### **Methodology**

The normative survey method was employed in the present investigation. Students studying in secondary and higher secondary schools of Uttarakhand comprised the population of the study. A random sampling procedure was followed and the sample consisted of 800 adolescent students.

**Tool:** The tool used for the study was Self-concept Inventory developed and standardised by R.K. Saraswat (1989, 95). It consists of 48 items and provides six separate dimensions of self-concept, viz., physical, social, intellectual, moral, educational and temperamental self-concept. It also gives a total self-concept score. The reliability of the inventory was found by test-retest method, and it was found to be 0.91 for the total self-concept measure. Reliability coefficients of its various dimensions vary from 0.67 to 0.88. The validity has been determined by estimating (i) content validity (ii) construct validity. For statistical treatment, Mean, S.D. and 't' test have been used for all the variables.

**Scoring method:** The respondent is provided with five alternatives which are arranged in such a way that the scoring system for all the items will remain the same i.e. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 whether the items are positive or negative. If the respondent put (Ö) mark for first alternative the score is 5, for second alternative the score is 4, for third alternative score is 3, for fourth alternative the score is 2 and

for the fifth alternative the score is 1. The summated score of all the 48 items provide the total self-concept score of an individual. A high score on this inventory indicates a higher self-concept, while a low score shows low self-concept.

**Analysis of Data**

***Gender differences and Self-concept***

To test the hypothesis that gender differences would not differ significantly on self-concept, the sample was divided into two categories i.e. male and female students.

**Table 1**

**Significance of Difference between the Means of Male and Female Adolescent Students on Various Dimensions of Self-concept**

The data were analysed with an appropriate test of difference of the means for independent groups. Mean scores obtained by adolescent female students for each dimensions of self-concept were compared with their counterpart i.e. adolescent male students.

Dimensions of self-concept	Mean and SD		t value
	Male (N=400)	Female (N=400)	
Physical self-concept	28.92 3.95	27.78 3.79	<b>4.22**</b>
Social self-concept	29.53 4.01	29.14 3.86	1.39
Temperamental self-concept	30.43 4.31	29.90 4.32	1.66
Educational self-concept	30.56 4.9	30.54 4.31	0.06
Moral self-concept	30.58 4.05	31.59 2.99	<b>4.04**</b>
Intellectual self-concept	26.82 3.82	26.29 3.64	0.63
Total self-concept	176.85 16.73	175.09 15.82	1.53

**\*\* Differences significant at 0.01 level**

- Results shown in Table 1 clearly indicate that there is no significant difference between male and female adolescents (CR=1.53, p>.05) with respect to their overall self-concept score. Thus, the hypothesis stating that boys and girls would not differ on total self-concept is sustained and the null hypothesis stands tenable.

- Significant differences was observed between the scores of males and females (CR=4.22,  $p < .01$ ) with respect to physical dimension of self-concept. Here males were found superior (M=28.92) than females (M=27.78). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.
- No significant differences were found between male and female students on social (CR=1.39,  $p > .05$ ), temperamental (CR=1.66,  $p > .05$ ), educational (CR=0.06,  $p > .05$ ) and intellectual (CR=0.63,  $p > .05$ ) dimensions of self-concept.
- Girls showed more inclination towards moral values (M=31.59) than boys (M=30.58). Hence, significant differences (CR= 4.04,  $p < .01$ ) was noted on moral dimension of self-concept.

### Region of Residence and Self-concept

To test the hypothesis that region of residence would not differ significantly on self-concept, the sample was divided into two categories i.e. urban and rural students.

**Table 2**

#### Significance of Difference between the Means of Urban and Rural Adolescent Students on Various Dimensions of Self-concept

Table 2 presents comparison between the means of urban and rural adolescent students on various dimensions of self-concept.

Dimensions of self-concept	Mean and SD		t value
	Urban (N=400)	Rural (N=400)	
Physical self-concept	28.68 3.87	28.02 3.93	<b>2.36*</b>
Social self-concept	29.66 3.83	29.01 4.02	<b>2.32*</b>
Temperamental self-concept	30.58 4.18	29.75 4.42	<b>2.77**</b>
Educational self-concept	30.77 4.71	30.32 4.51	1.41
Moral self-concept	30.95 3.64	31.21 3.54	1.04
Intellectual self-concept	26.90 3.76	26.21 3.69	<b>2.76**</b>
Total self-concept	177.41 15.42	174.53 17.03	<b>2.50*</b>

\* Differences significant at .05 level

\*\* Differences significant at .01 level

- A perusal of Table 2 indicates that there is significant difference between urban and rural adolescent students (CR=2.5,  $p < .05$ ) with respect to their overall self-concept. Thus, the hypothesis

stating that urban and rural students would not differ on total self-concept is rejected.

- Urban students were superior than their rural counterparts on physical (CR=2.36,  $p < .05$ ), social (CR=2.32,  $p < .05$ ), temperamental (CR=2.77,  $p < .01$ ), and intellectual (CR= 2.76,  $p < .01$ ) dimensions of self-concept.
- Region of residence did not account for educational (CR=1.41,  $p > .05$ ) and moral (CR=1.04,  $p > .05$ ) dimensions of self-concept. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted at .05 level of significance.

### **Type of Management and Self-concept**

To test the hypothesis that type of management would not differ significantly on self-concept, the sample was divided into two categories i.e. Public school and government school students.

**Table 3**

**Significance of Difference between the means of Public school and Government School Students on Various Dimensions of Self-concept**

Table 3 provides statistical testing of the two groups formed on various dimensions of self-concept. The mean scores obtained by Public school students for each dimensions of self-concept were compared with their counterpart i.e. Government school students.

Dimensions of self-concept	Mean and SD		t value
	Public School (N=400)	Government School (N=400)	
Physical self-concept	28.10 4.04	28.60 3.76	1.85
Social self-concept	29.62 3.99	29.05 3.87	<b>2.03*</b>
Temperamental self-concept	29.59 4.41	30.74 4.50	<b>3.59**</b>
Educational self-concept	29.15 4.60	31.94 4.19	<b>9.00**</b>
Moral self-concept	30.33 3.87	31.84 3.11	<b>6.04**</b>
Intellectual self-concept	26.38 3.61	26.73 3.86	1.35
Total self-concept	173.20 16.52	178.70 15.61	<b>4.89**</b>

\* Differences significant at 0.05 level

\*\* Differences significant at 0.01 level



- Table 3 indicates that there is significant difference between Public school students and Government school students (CR=4.89,  $p < .01$ ) with respect to their overall self-concept score. Government school students (M=178.70) scored higher on total self-concept than Public school students (M=173.20). Thus, the hypothesis stating that type of management would not differ on total self-concept is rejected.
- Significant differences was observed between the scores of Public school students and Government school students with respect to social dimension (CR=2.03,  $p < .05$ ), temperamental (CR=3.59,  $p < .01$ ), educational (CR=9,  $p < .01$ ) and moral (CR=6.04,  $p < .01$ ) dimensions of self-concept. Public school students were superior to their counterparts i.e. Government school students on social self-concept whereas, Government school students scored higher on temperamental, educational and moral dimensions of self-concept.
- No significant differences were found between Public school students and Government school students on physical (CR=1.85,  $p > .05$ ), and intellectual (CR=1.35,  $p > .05$ ) dimensions of self-concept. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted at .05 level of significance.

## Discussion

In analysing the results of the study, the researcher found no significant differences existed in the self-concept of male and female adolescent students. Hence, the null hypothesis stands tenable. The findings are corroborative of the results of Bhogayata (1986) and Gyanani (1999) where no gender differences were found. However, Kumari, Sushama (2001) suggested that males had better global self-concept than females.

Males were found superior than females on physical dimension of self-concept (Table 1). Hence,  $H_{01}$  stating that 'boys and girls would not differ on physical dimension of self-concept' is rejected. The finding is in conformity to those of Gyanani (1999), Halder and Dutta (2010) who stated that boys perceived themselves to be more masculine. However, findings of Saraswat (1982) Rothemburg (1997) and Mohammad Al-Zyoudi (2007) do not agree to this result.

Social self-concepts are derived from social interactions with social groups – home, peer, or community. If a person who as a child or an adolescent was discriminated due to gender, race, social class, or religion, he will hold low self-concept. Results of our findings

have shown that there was no significant difference in social self-concept of adolescent boys and girls. The finding is contradictory to the finding of Saraswat (1982) and Gyanani (1999) who found girls higher on social dimension. Kagade (1997), Rothemburg (1997), Mohammad Al-Zyoudi (2007) found differences between boys and girls on social dimension of self-concept. Further, both the groups have shown above average on temperamental dimension of self-concept, but the mean score shows that boys ( $M=30.43$ ) are emotionally stronger than girls ( $M=29.90$ ). This finding is in conformity to that of Gyanani (1999) who suggested that girls are higher in emotional areas than boys.

The researcher feels that education is a potent weapon of social mobility. Hence, both the groups have shown equal weightage. The finding is in conformity to that of Kagade (1997) who stated that boys and girls do not differ in educational adjustment. The sub hypothesis stating that 'there would be no significant difference between boys and girls on intellectual dimension of self-concept' is accepted. The computed  $t$  value is 0.63, which is not significant at 0.05 level. The result is contradictory to that of Gyanani (1999); Halder and Dutta (2010) who stated that males were higher than females on intellectual dimension of self-concept. Girls showed more inclination towards moral values ( $M=31.59$ ) than boys ( $M=30.58$ ). Hence, significant differences ( $t= 4.04$ ) was noted on moral dimension of self-concept. The researcher feels that girls have higher moral and religious values; they are sensitive, honest, truthful, god fearing and believe in disciplined life. This result is contradictory to the finds of Rothemburg (1997) Mohammad Al-Zyoudi (2007) who found that females scored lower on moral dimension of self-concept than their counterparts i.e. males.

After analysing the data in Table 2, the  $H_0$  which stated that 'urban students would not differ from rural students on total self-concept and various dimensions of self-concept viz. physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual' is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that urban students have scored more than their rural counterpart on physical, social, temperamental and intellectual dimensions of self-concept (Table 2). Although, region of residence did not account for educational and moral dimensions of self-concept, the mean scores of urban students were higher in both the dimension. The findings of Bhogayata (1986) support our findings. He stated that urban students had higher self-concept than their rural counterparts.

A perusal of Table 3 indicated that although both the groups have scored above average on total self-concept, the mean score of Government school students (M=178.70) are higher than Public school students (M=173.20). The Government school students were better on temperamental, educational, moral dimensions of self-concept while the Public school students were superior on social and intellectual dimensions of self-concept. Thus,  $H_{03}$  which stated that 'Public School students would not differ from Government School students on total self-concept and various dimensions of self-concept viz. physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual' is rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

It is noticed that Public school students (M=29.62) were superior to the Government school students (M=29.05) on social dimension of self-concept. The researcher is of the opinion that the process of socialisation and family background affects social behaviour. The family teaches social qualities like cooperation, friendliness and sympathy which are desired behaviour. The students studying in Public schools belong to middle or higher income group and are from educated background. They belong to a social group where socially desired behaviour is expected from them. They are exposed to a wide environment. Their parents motivate them and provide facilities to them. They encourage them and also have high expectation from them. This enables them to interact and take initiative. They are democratic in their thinking and choose their own career. Students studying in Government schools in our sample belonged to both rural and urban areas. Those from rural background do not have much exposure and therefore hesitate in decision-making. They have inhibition to interact with other sections of the society. Therefore, inspite of showing inclination towards social dimension of self-concept they are still below their counterpart.

The researcher feels that the Government school students (M=30.74) are more sensitive, emotional, fearful and impulsive hence they scored higher on temperamental dimension of self-concept. This may be because most of them are from low income or middle income group. The Public school students (M=29.59) are more optimistic and broad minded than their counterpart. However, the result showed that both the groups have shown above average on this dimension of self-concept.

Although both the groups have shown above average self-concept, the Government school students (M=31.94) scored higher in educational dimension of self-concept than their counterparts

i.e. Public school students ( $M=29.15$ ). Hence, significant differences ( $t= 9$ ) was noted on educational dimension of self-concept. This may be because education is the only potent weapon for vertical social mobility. In other words, by obtaining education they can also earn money and luxuries of life. It will help them to rise up in the society and get a white collared job which is not possible otherwise.

Comparing the two groups formed on the basis of type of management, it was observed that Government school students showed more inclination towards moral values ( $M=31.84$ ) than Public school students ( $M=30.33$ ). The researcher feels that the type of management affects moral self-concept because the sample comprised of both rural and urban students. The Public school students are influenced by the Western culture. They have modern outlook and mostly belong to high or upper middle class. The Government school students who mostly belong to middle and lower income group still maintain the moral values taught by their families. They have yet not been completely influenced by the western culture. Hence, the Indian values of honesty, truthfulness are still present in them.

There is no significant difference between Public school students and Government school students on intellectual dimension of self-concept ( $t=1.35$ ). Type of management does not affect intellectual dimension of self-concept. The researcher is of the opinion that intelligence is an inborn trait. The result is contradictory to the findings of Pareek (1990) who stated that adolescents studying in Private schools were more intelligent than those in Government schools.

## **Conclusion**

Considering the findings and discussion of the study and taking into account the hypotheses of the study following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Gender differences does not affect self-concept though significant differences were observed in the two groups on physical and moral dimension of self-concept. Boys scored higher on physical self-concept while girls perceived themselves high on moral self aspect.
2. Further, findings revealed that region of residence does affect self-concept of adolescents. Urban students had higher self-concept

than their rural counterpart on physical, social, temperamental, educational and intellectual dimensions of self-concept while rural adolescents scored higher than them on moral dimension of self-concept.

3. Type of management did not affect physical and intellectual dimensions of self-concept. Public school students scored better on social dimension of self-concept while Government school students were superior on temperamental, educational, moral and total self-concept.

### **Educational Implication of the study**

Self-concept is a special framework that influences how we process information about the social world around us along with information about ourselves such as our motives, emotional states, self evaluations and much more. Since children's motivational beliefs, perception, attitudes and eventual occupational choices are shaped by their parents, teachers and cultural forces (Jacobs, Chhin and Bleeker, 2006; Nosek et al. 2009), it is essential to develop a healthy self-concept in them which will enable them to enhance their personality to the fullest. Children should be provided with basic capacities such as education, knowledge and skills to empower them and make them responsible adults. Social and economic support network are essential to guide them in times of crisis. Freedom to explore and experiment yet protection from danger- such a type of environment should be created for children and adolescents (Baumrind, 1991). Along with this, feeling of acceptance, positive feedback and a sense of caring attitude will help them to develop positive self-concept. This is because individuals who develop healthy self-concept have more confidences in their abilities; they are able to take decisions properly and are more successful in their life and career. While those with negative self image view themselves as failures in life and have difficulty with their social skills (Vernon, 1993). Hence, adolescents should be respected, approved and accepted for what they are by the person or group which influences them. They should be encouraged to form a favourable social judgement about themselves. On the contrary, if they are blamed or rejected, it negatively affects their self-concept. Low self esteem tends to make a person set low goals. It leads to lack of persistence, ambition and even isolation. Hence, the present findings bear significant implications for parents, teachers, educationalists and society.

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