

## ADOLESCENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SELF

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### ABSTRACT

**Adolescence** is the period starts from age 12/13 to the beginning of adulthood. This is the shifting period from childhood to adulthood, marked with physical and mental changes. These changes are commented by their family members, relatives, peers, and teachers who in turn shape their thinking about their own self either positively or negatively. The child's attitude towards self plays an important role in the child's life especially during the critical adolescent years. Knowledge of such type of studies will help us to increase our understanding about the problems of adolescents in particular. The paper aims to find out their attitude towards self. The positive or negative attitude adolescent develops will affect their future life. The questionnaire is developed to measures attitude towards self which is quantitative data. Informal interviews supports with qualitative data which has helped to interpret results with less bias. Further, research also attempt to find out whether boy student has different attitude towards self than girl students.

**Key Words:** *Adolescence, Attitude*

### Introduction

**Observation about adolescents** have a long history, Aristotle (384 B.C.) turned his attention to adolescence physical changes in puberty.

The word 'Adolescence' comes from the Latin language *adolescere* which means 'to grow to maturity.' Growing to maturity includes: physical growth, attainment of a mature structure, the learning of physical characteristics, mental maturation and the development of secondary-sex characteristics. Mental development involves intellectual, emotional and social maturity. Whereas, psychologically, adolescents are perceived in terms of their attitudes, behavior, mental health and developmental status.

Adolescence is the period of transition from late childhood to independent adulthood that is the span of ten years marked with sexual growth. A well known psychologist, **Erickson** (1959, 1968), refer adolescent age, as period of 'Identity crisis'. **Freud** (1950), known as Father of Psychology, regarded 'adolescence as the genital stage of Psychosexuality.' The society's image of the

adolescents is somewhat confused montage, varying from the extremely critical to the highly sentimental.

Encyclopedia Britannica defines attitude as: 'predisposition to classify objects and events and to react to them with evaluative consistency.'

The research paper focuses on adolescent students in particular, and their attitude towards their own self in junior colleges in Pune city.

Attitude towards self is the most dominating one especially during adolescence, as pupils become more conscious about themselves, their appearance and are sensitive towards reaction of others towards them. The good and appreciating reactions from others help to shape their concept of self, which in turn results in positive self-image or vice versa. In this connection **William James** states: "The self was simply an object, like any other. In this sense the self is whatever the individual feels belongs to the self, including the material self and the social self. James's material self is referred to the individual's possessions, including the body. James's social self was concerned with the views of the others as was felt by the individual. There was also an affective component associated with the self, the positive or negative views the individual holds about himself".

### Review of Related Literature

The self undergoes changes right from childhood as the child keeps on growing right up to adolescent stage and takes proper shape after the adolescent stage. Several factors are responsible for such changes, which are physical, emotional, psychological & sociological. He may have negative or positive traits depending upon his heredity and environment, his upbringing, love and affection received from parents and siblings, and the atmosphere at school level. Peers also contribute greatly to the shaping of the child's personality. The following studies illustrate the various view points of eminent experts:

Studies of boys by **Cooper Smith** (1967-68) investigated factors influencing self-acceptance. The younger, were given a variety of tests of personality and ability. In general, the boys who seemed to be more competent regarded themselves more positively by virtue of their achievement in a variety of areas; they received greater recognition from others, which enhanced their self-image. Boys with high self-esteem more often had mothers who rated them positively than boys with low self-esteem. Their parents also tended to manifest high self-esteem. Specific parental child-rearing practices were also found to be related to the level of esteem displayed by the boys.

**Dixon, M. M**(1958) studied the personal and social interests and aspirations of girls aged 11-18, and concluded that adolescent girls are under the most stress between the ages 14 and 16 when they are beginning to make important contacts outside of their families.

In another study, **Sears** (1970) reported that sixth-grade children whose parents displayed 'warmth and affection' were more often found to have positive self-esteem.

An investigation by **Simmons**(1973) found that when youngsters enter Junior high school normally there a disturbance in their self-image. Twelve-year olds in Junior high school as compared with twelve-year olds remaining in elementary school reported lower self-esteem and greater self-consciousness, Moreover, the adolescents in Junior high school more often reported that other individuals held negative opinion of them.

In a longitudinal study **Engel**<sup>3</sup>1956) tested youngsters when they were in the eight and tenth grades and then again when they were two years older she found that as a group the youngsters exhibited considerable continuity in their self-concepts over the two-year period Adolescents with favorable self-concepts were more stable in their views of themselves than adolescents with unfavorable self-concepts.

In a study of youngsters when in grade six and then again when in grade twelve **Carlson** (1965) also found considerable stability in adolescent self-concepts, although approximately one third of the adolescents showed some instability in the conception of themselves.

**Monge** (1973), in a factor analytic study of students in grades six through twelve studied the self-concept of adolescents. He found considerable consistency among the adolescents of varying ages in their self-concepts, males showed greater consistency of self-concepts than females.

According to **Bardwick**, (1971) because females in America tend to be devalued in comparison with men, it has been alleged that females have fewer positive feelings about themselves than men.

In a study of stability and change in eleven and seventeen-year olds **Carlson** (1965) found that at both ages no sex difference appeared in either the level or the stability of the adolescents' self-esteem.

**Bohen** reported that tenth-grade females had lower self-esteem scores than fourth, sixth and eight-grade females and males and tenth-grade males.

**Silverman et al** (1970) found that female college students were similar to male college students in the percentage of favorable adjectives they used in describing themselves.

**Maccoby and Jacklin** (1974) concluded that when sex differences in self-esteem do appear they are no more likely to favor one sex than the other.

In a study by **Crandall** (1969), college students were asked to indicate the grades they expected to achieve in several courses. Their expected grade and actual grade were then compared. He found that the males tended to overestimate the grades they would receive, whereas females tended to underestimate their expected grades.

According to **Carlson** (1971), college males are more individualistic than college females and females are more socially oriented than males in their own self-description.

In a study by **Simmons** (1973); data were obtained from students in grade three to twelve. The findings indicate that a disturbance of the self-image is more likely to occur in adolescence than in earlier years. The findings suggest that an early adolescent has become more self-conscious, less assured in his self-esteem and in his picture of himself, and inclined to believe that parents, teachers and peers of the same sex view him less favorably than at an earlier time.

According to **Jacob** (1957), some colleges seem to have a 'peculiar potency' in providing an institutional atmosphere a 'climate of values' in which students are "decisively influenced".

**Sanford** (1958) notes that in the peer culture in college the accent is on moderation and leveling. In a long-term study of students in a women's college, **Sanford** noted that senior girls were on an average more self-critical and more uncertain of themselves than they were as freshmen.

Grambs, J.D & Waetjen, W. B. studied difference in male and female and found that males are more aggressive than females. An analysis of child rearing practices demonstrate that parents permit more expression of aggression from boys than from girls.

**Feldman and Newcomb** (1969) found that changes appeared between the freshman and these in the senior years of college in a number of characteristics, authoritarianism and prejudice seemed to decrease, while sensitivity to aesthetic experiences and a liberal attitude towards public appeared to increase during the four years of college. Changes may also occur in the personal sphere, such as increased independence and self-confidence.

Typically, at the 'traditional' small, private college where there is more informality and an opportunity to acquire close personal relationships, there is the potential for significant institutional wide impact.

"One favorable finding about college students indicates that they take a more humane and thoughtful views of human foibles than younger persons do." - **A.T. Jersild and others**

**Cole, L. & Hall, N.(1970)** studied the changing values and attitudes in high school and college gives a contrast between traditional and emerging values. The former attitudes are characterized by interest in successful work in plans for the future, by independence from social pressure and by puritan morality. Emergent values are defined as centering upon the present rather than the future, upon social relations, upon conformity and upon less rigid morality.

### **Purpose**

1. To study the adolescents and their positive and negative attitude towards self.
2. To study the adolescents boys attitude towards self as compared to girls.

### **Methodology**

#### **Sample**

The sample of adolescent students was deliberately selected, as they were focus of study. In all 1065 students participated in the research. Out of it 549 were boys and 516 were girls.

#### **Tools Used**

Such investigation calls for the survey method. The researcher prepared the questionnaire cum attitude scale. The answers were obtained on five point scale. The interview was arranged in the form of informal discussion which has given a sound base of qualitative information.

Thus, study of review of related literature, use of questionnaire-cum-attitude scale and interviews were the tools used by the researcher to investigate the problem.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Test of Hypothesis 1**

The study of adolescents' attitude towards self has given a lot of insight in students problems and their concerns. While answering the question from questionnaire whether others treat them as an adolescent? Some of the students significantly stated that they are treated as a child. Some students feel self conscious and some of them opine that they are not capable of taking their own decisions. Some reported that they feel confident and some did not. Some students feel significantly inferior whereas some reported that they are well adjusted to college atmosphere. Questions from questionnaire revealed about their tension, feeling of confidence, shyness, freeness in daily activities, and feeling of insecurity and do they respect themselves? The results show various responses. Some of the comments given by them in interview are directly quoted here:

‘We can have various attitudes on various subjects’, ‘ We become bold, brave and confident’, ‘ I get status in life’, ‘ I feel happy’, ‘If I become a teacher, I will understand every child, his/her talent and how to teach average student’

These comments confirm the first hypothesis that adolescents do have positive or negative attitude towards themselves. If child receives parent's affection, acceptance, attention, love, security then he

will have positive attitude towards self. If a child experiences rejection, insecurity and indifference in treatment, unwanted feelings then child may develop negative attitude towards self. Comments also reveal that an adolescent has various attitudes on various subjects and would like to discuss it in friendly atmosphere with parents and teachers. It seems they need a helping hand at this stage of life to have more clear views towards healthy life.

## **Test of Hypothesis 2**

The boy students had different attitude towards self as compared to girl students. The results show that boys have more positive attitude towards self. Girls feel more embarrassed. The comments itself speaks about these differences. Girl student comments are: 'I like to share my feelings', 'I feel friendly', 'I don't like to study it irritates me' where as boys comments are 'I feel adjusted', 'I experience stress', 'I am not worried', 'I feel confident' These comments show that physical and mental changes through which the child is passing through has different impact on their cognitive thinking. At this stage the family support and friendly approach of parents and teachers may be helpful to ease out their problems and confusion. Researchers would like to emphasize the importance of parental role in the child's life.

## **Student's reactions about the present study**

Being a professor of psychology, the comments received on questionnaire made by adolescent girls and boys are appealing:

- 'The questionnaire was very interesting'
- 'It has affected us positively'
- 'More and more surveys of a similar nature need to be conducted'
- 'We felt like thinking about each matter'
- 'We got more points to think'
- 'The questionnaire has given us different angle to think'
- 'This questionnaire has enlightened us'
- 'It has covered all the important aspects of student's life'
- 'We let out our feelings in this questionnaire'
- 'We understood ourselves and could express better'
- 'It has given us better ways to look at the opposite-sex and to understand their problems'
- 'More personal questions should have been asked'
- 'Questions should have been more specific and more options should have been provided'
- 'The questionnaire should obtain opinion on pubs, disco, drugs etc.'

The point in giving these comments on questionnaire was to make parents, teachers and in general society aware that the adolescent's cry for help, support, is in need let out their feelings. They also want to discuss more specific and personal questions and ask for answers and solutions.

## **The Researcher's Impressions**

The topic chosen by me was far more interesting and instructive than I thought. I could probe deep into the inner recesses of the minds of the young students. Divergent views were obtained from different students. On one hand some students displayed modernity to the extreme and on the other some students displayed orthodoxy to the extreme. So I personally feel that more such studies should be conducted in order to understand student's problems in general and adolescent's problems in particular.

## **Suggestions and Recommendations**

1. Each college should have a counselor.
2. Teachers should be friendly with students
3. Apart from teaching, extra time should be given for guiding the pupils
4. The mind-set of the youth can be changed through media, awareness programs, NGO's and celebrities should come forward with good advice and positive images.
5. Parents should be approachable, friendly and supportive.

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